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ON TRANSLATING HOMER

LONDON
PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO.
NEW-STREET SQUARE

ON TRANSLATING HOMER

THREE LECTURES

GIVEN AT OXFORD

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LONDON

LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, AND ROBERTS

1861

..... *Nunquamne reponam ?*

ON TRANSLATING HOMER.

I.

It has more than once been suggested to me that I should translate Homer. That is a task for which I have neither the time nor the courage; but the suggestion led me to regard yet moré closely a poet whom I had already long studied, and for one or two years the works of Homer were seldom out of my hands. The study of classical literature is probably on the decline; but, whatever may be the fate of this study in general, it is certain that as instruction spreads and the number of readers increases, attention will be more and more directed to the poetry of Homer, not indeed as part of a classical course, but as the most important poetical monument existing. Even within the last ten years two fresh translations of the Iliad have appeared in England: one by a man of great ability and genuine learning, Professor Newman; the other by Mr. Wright, the conscientious and painstaking translator of Dante. It may safely be asserted that neither of these works will take rank

as the standard translation of Homer; that the task of rendering him will still be attempted by other translators. It may perhaps be possible to render to these some service, to save them some loss of labour, by pointing out rocks on which their predecessors have split, and the right objects on which a translator of Homer should fix his attention.

It is disputed, what aim a translator should propose to himself in dealing with his original. Even this preliminary is not yet settled. On one side it is said, that the translation ought to be such "that the reader should, if possible, forget that it is a translation at all, and be lulled into the illusion that he is reading an original work; something original," (if the translation be in English), "from an English hand." The real original is in this case, it is said, "taken as a basis on which to rear a poem that shall affect our countrymen as the original may be conceived to have affected its natural hearers." On the other hand, Mr. Newman, who states the foregoing doctrine only to condemn it, declares that he "aims at precisely the opposite: to retain every peculiarity of the original, so far as he is able, *with the greater care the more foreign it may happen to be;*" so that it may "never be forgotten that he is imitating, and imitating in a different material." The translator's "first duty," says Mr. Newman, "is a historical one; to be *faithful.*" Probably both sides would agree that the translator's "first duty is to be faithful;"

but the question at issue between them is, in what faithfulness consists.

My one object is to give practical advice to a translator; and I shall not the least concern myself with theories of translation as such. But I advise the translator not to try "to rear on the basis of the Iliad, a poem that shall affect our countrymen as the original may be conceived to have affected its natural hearers;" and for this simple reason, that we cannot possibly tell *how* the Iliad "affected its natural hearers." It is probably meant merely that he should try to affect Englishmen powerfully, as Homer affected Greeks powerfully; but this direction is not enough, and can give no real guidance. For all great poets affect their hearers powerfully, but the effect of one poet is one thing, that of another poet another thing: it is our translator's business to reproduce the effect of Homer, and the most powerful emotion of the unlearned English reader can never assure him whether he has *re*produced this, or whether he has produced something else. So, again, he may follow Mr. Newman's directions, he may try to be "faithful," he may "retain every peculiarity of his original;" but who is to assure him, who is to assure Mr. Newman himself, that, when he has done this, he has done that for which Mr. Newman enjoins this to be done, "adhered closely to Homer's manner and habit of thought?" Evidently the translator needs some more practical directions than these. No

one can tell him how Homer affected the Greeks; but there are those who can tell him how Homer affects *them*. These are scholars; who possess, at the same time with knowledge of Greek, adequate poetical taste and feeling. No translation will seem to them of much worth compared with the original; but they alone can say, whether the translation produces more or less the same effect upon them as the original. They are the only competent tribunal in this matter: the Greeks are dead; the unlearned Englishman has not the data for judging; and no man can safely confide in his own single judgment of his own work. Let not the translator, then, trust to his notions of what the ancient Greeks would have thought of him; he will lose himself in the vague. Let him not trust to what the ordinary English reader thinks of him; he will be taking the blind for his guide. Let him not trust to his own judgment of his own work; he may be misled by individual caprices. Let him ask how his work affects those who both know Greek and can appreciate poetry; whether to read it gives the Provost of Eton, or Professor Thompson at Cambridge, or Professor Jowett here in Oxford, at all the same feeling which to read the original gives them. I consider that when Bentley said of Pope's translation, "it was a pretty poem, but must not be called Homer," the work, in spite of all its power and attractiveness, was judged.

Ὡς ἂν ὅ φρόνιμος ὁρίσειεν—"as the judicious would

determine "—that is a test to which everyone professes himself willing to submit his works. Unhappily, in most cases, no two persons agree as to who "the judicious" are. In the present case, the ambiguity is removed: I suppose the translator at one with me as to the tribunal to which alone he should look for judgment; and he has thus obtained a practical test by which to estimate the real success of his work. How is he to proceed, in order that his work, tried by this test, may be found most successful?

First of all, there are certain negative counsels which I will give him. Homer has occupied men's minds so much, such a literature has arisen about him, that everyone who approaches him should resolve strictly to limit himself to that which may directly serve the object for which he approaches him. I advise the translator to have nothing to do with the questions, whether Homer ever existed; whether the poet of the Iliad be one or many; whether the Iliad be one poem or an Achilleis and an Iliad stuck together; whether the Christian doctrine of the Atonement is shadowed forth in the Homeric mythology; whether the Goddess Latona in any way prefigures the Virgin Mary, and so on. These are questions which have been discussed with learning, with ingenuity, nay, with genius; but they have two inconveniences; one general for all who approach them, one particular for the translator. The general inconvenience is,

that there really exist no data for determining them. The particular inconvenience is, that their solution by the translator, even were it possible, could be of no benefit to his translation.

I advise him, again, not to trouble himself with constructing a special vocabulary for his use in translation; with excluding a certain class of English words, and with confining himself to another class, in obedience to any theory about the peculiar qualities of Homer's style. Mr. Newman says that "the entire dialect of Homer being essentially archaic, that of a translator ought to be as much Saxo-Norman as possible, and owe as little as possible to the elements thrown into our language by classical learning." Mr. Newman is unfortunate in the observance of his own theory; for I continually find in his translation words of Latin origin, which seem to me quite alien to the simplicity of Homer: "responsive," for instance, which is a favourite word of Mr. Newman, to represent the Homeric *ἀμειβόμενος*:

> Great Hector of the motley helm thus spake to her *responsive*.
> But thus *responsively* to him spake god-like Alexander.

And the word "celestial," again, in the grand address of Zeus to the horses of Achilles,

> You, who are born *celestial*, from Eld and Death exempted!

seems to me in that place exactly to jar upon the feeling as too bookish. But, apart from the question

of Mr. Newman's fidelity to his own theory, such a theory seems to me both dangerous for a translator and false in itself. Dangerous for a translator; because, wherever one finds such a theory announced, (and one finds it pretty often), it is generally followed by an explosion of pedantry; and pedantry is of all things in the world the most un-Homeric. False in itself; because, in fact, we owe to the Latin element in our language most of that very rapidity and clear decisiveness by which it is contradistinguished from the German, and in sympathy with the languages of Greece and Rome: so that to limit an English translator of Homer to words of Saxon origin is to deprive him of one of his special advantages for translating Homer. In Voss's well-known translation of Homer, it is precisely the qualities of his German language itself, something heavy and trailing both in the structure of its sentences and in the words of which it is composed, which prevent his translation, in spite of the hexameters, in spite of the fidelity, from creating in us the impression created by the Greek. Mr. Newman's prescription, if followed, would just strip the English translator of the advantage which he has over Voss.

The frame of mind in which we approach an author influences our correctness of appreciation of him; and Homer should be approached by a translator in the simplest frame of mind possible. Modern sentiment tries to make the ancient not less than

the modern world its own; but against modern sentiment in its applications to Homer the translator, if he would feel Homer truly—and unless he feels him truly, how can he render him truly?—cannot be too much on his guard. For example: the writer of an interesting article on English translations of Homer, in the last number of the National Review, quotes, I see, with admiration, a criticism of Mr. Ruskin on the use of the epithet *φυσίζοος*, "life-giving," in that beautiful passage, in the third book of the Iliad, which follows Helen's mention of her brothers Castor and Pollux as alive, though they were in truth dead:

> *ὣς φάτο· τοὺς δ' ἤδη κάτεχεν φυσίζοος αἶα*
> *ἐν Λακεδαίμονι αὖθι, φίλῃ ἐν πατρίδι γαίῃ.*

"The poet," says Mr. Ruskin, "has to speak of the earth in sadness; but he will not let that sadness affect or change his thought of it. No; though Castor and Pollux be dead, yet the earth is our mother still,—fruitful, life-giving." This is just a specimen of that sort of application of modern sentiment to the ancients, against which a student, who wishes to feel the ancients truly, cannot too resolutely defend himself. It reminds one, as, alas! so much of Mr. Ruskin's writing reminds one, of those words of the most delicate of living critics: "Comme tout genre de composition a son écueil particulier, *celui*

* *Iliad*, iii, 243.

du genre romanesque, c'est le faux." The reader may feel moved as he reads it; but it is not the less an example of "le faux" in criticism; it is false. It is not true, as to that particular passage, that Homer called the earth φυσίζοος because, "though he had to speak of the earth in sadness, he would not let that sadness change or affect his thought of it," but consoled himself by considering that "the earth is our mother still,—fruitful, life-giving." It is not true, as a matter of general criticism, that this kind of sentimentality, eminently modern, inspires Homer at all. "From Homer and Polygnotus I every day learn more clearly," says Goethe, "that in our life here above ground we have, properly speaking, to enact Hell*:"—if the student must absolutely have a key-note to the Iliad, let him take this of Goethe, and see what he can do with it; it will not, at any rate, like the tender pantheism of Mr. Ruskin, falsify for him the whole strain of Homer.

These are negative counsels; I come to the positive. When I say, the translator of Homer should above all be penetrated by a sense of four qualities of his author:—that he is eminently rapid; that he is eminently plain and direct both in the evolution of his thought and in the expression of it, that is, both in his syntax and in his words; that he is eminently plain and direct in the substance of his

* *Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe*, vi, 230.

thought, that is, in his matter and ideas; and, finally, that he is eminently noble;—I probably seem to be saying what is too general to be of much service to anybody. Yet it is strictly true that, for want of duly penetrating themselves with the first-named quality of Homer, his rapidity, Cowper and Mr. Wright have failed in rendering him; that, for want of duly appreciating the second-named quality, his plainness and directness of style and diction, Pope and Mr. Sotheby have failed in rendering him; that for want of appreciating the third, his plainness and directness of ideas, Chapman has failed in rendering him; while for want of appreciating the fourth, his nobleness, Mr. Newman, who has clearly seen some of the faults of his predecessors, has yet failed more conspicuously than any of them.

Coleridge says, in his strange language, speaking of the union of the human soul with the divine essence, that this takes place,

> Whene'er the mist, which stands 'twixt God and thee,
> Defæcates to a pure transparency;

and so, too, it may be said of that union of the translator with his original, which alone can produce a good translation, that it takes place when the mist which stands between them—the mist of alien modes of thinking, speaking, and feeling on the translator's part—"defæcates to a pure transparency," and dis-

appears. But between Cowper and Homer — (Mr. Wright repeats in the main Cowper's manner, as Mr. Sotheby repeats Pope's manner, and neither Mr. Wright's translation nor Mr. Sotheby's has, I must be forgiven for saying, any proper reason for existing) — between Cowper and Homer there is interposed the mist of Cowper's elaborate Miltonic manner, entirely alien to the flowing rapidity of Homer; between Pope and Homer there is interposed the mist of Pope's literary artificial manner, entirely alien to the plain naturalness of Homer's manner; between Chapman and Homer there is interposed the mist of the fancifulness of the Elizabethan age, entirely alien to the plain directness of Homer's thought and feeling; while between Mr. Newman and Homer is interposed a cloud of more than Ægyptian thickness — namely, a manner, in Mr. Newman's version, eminently ignoble, while Homer's manner is eminently noble.

I do not despair of making all these propositions clear to a student who approaches Homer with a free mind. First, Homer is eminently rapid, and to this rapidity the elaborate movement of Miltonic blank verse is alien. The reputation of Cowper, that most interesting man and excellent poet, does not depend on his translation of Homer; and in his preface to the second edition, he himself tells us that he felt — he had too much poetical taste not to feel—on returning to his own version after six or seven years, "more dissatisfied with it himself than the most diffi-

cult to be pleased of all his judges." And he was dissatisfied with it for the right reason—that "it seemed to him deficient *in the grace of ease.*" Yet he seems to have originally misconceived the manner of Homer so much, that it is no wonder he rendered him amiss. "The similitude of Milton's manner to that of Homer is such," he says, "that no person familiar with both can read either without being reminded of the other; and it is in those breaks and pauses to which the numbers of the English poet are so much indebted both for their dignity and variety, that he chiefly copies the Grecian." It would be more true to say: "The unlikeness of Milton's manner to that of Homer is such, that no person familiar with both can read either without being struck with his difference from the other; and it is in his breaks and pauses that the English poet is most unlike the Grecian."

The inversion and pregnant conciseness of Milton or Dante are, doubtless, most impressive qualities of style; but they are the very opposites of the directness and flowingness of Homer, which he keeps alike in passages of the simplest narrative, and in those of the deepest emotion. Not only, for example, are these lines of Cowper un-Homeric:

> So numerous seem'd those fires the banks between
> Of Xanthus, blazing, and the fleet of Greece
> In prospect all of Troy;

where the position of the word "blazing" gives an

entirely un-Homeric movement to this simple passage, describing the fires of the Trojan camp outside of Troy; but the following lines, in that very highly-wrought passage where the horse of Achilles answers his master's reproaches for having left Patroclus on the field of battle, are equally un-Homeric:

> For not through sloth or tardiness on us
> Aught chargeable, have Ilium's sons thine arms
> Stript from Patroclus' shoulders; but a God
> Matchless in battle, offspring of bright-hair'd
> Latona, him contending in the van
> Slew, for the glory of the chief of Troy.

Here even the first inversion, "have Ilium's sons thine arms Stript from Patroclus' shoulders," gives the reader a sense of a movement not Homeric; and the second inversion, "a God him contending in the van Slew," gives this sense ten times stronger. Instead of moving on without check, as in reading the original, the reader twice finds himself, in reading the translation, brought up and checked. Homer moves with the same simplicity and rapidity in the highly-wrought as in the simple passage.

It is in vain that Cowper insists on his fidelity: "my chief boast is that I have adhered closely to my original:"—"the matter found in me, whether the reader like it or not, is found also in Homer; and the matter not found in me, how much soever the reader may admire it, is found only in Mr. Pope." To suppose that it is *fidelity* to an original to give its

matter, unless you at the same time give its manner; or, rather, to suppose that you can really give its matter at all, unless you can give its manner, is just the mistake of our pre-Raphaelite school of painters, who do not understand that the peculiar effect of nature resides in the whole and not in the parts. So the peculiar effect of a poet resides in his manner and movement, not in his words taken separately. It is well known how conscientiously literal is Cowper in his translation of Homer. It is well known how extravagantly free is Pope:

> So let it be!
> Portents and prodigies are lost on me:

that is Pope's rendering of the words,

> Ξάνθε, τί μοι θάνατον μαντεύεαι; οὐδέ τί σε χρή·*
> Xanthus, why prophesiest thou my death to me? thou needest not at all:

yet, on the whole, Pope's translation of the Iliad is more Homeric than Cowper's, for it is more rapid.

Pope's movement, however, though rapid, is not of the same kind as Homer's; and here I come to the real objection to rhyme in a translation of Homer. It is commonly said that rhyme is to be abandoned in a translation of Homer, because "the exigences of rhyme," to quote Mr. Newman, "positively forbid faithfulness;" because "a just translation of any ancient poet in rhyme," to quote Cowper, "is impossible." This, however, is merely an acci-

* *Iliad*, xix, 420.

dental objection to rhyme. If this were all, it might be supposed that if rhymes were more abundant, Homer could be adequately translated in rhyme. But this is not so; there is a deeper, a substantial objection to rhyme in a translation of Homer. It is, that rhyme inevitably tends to pair lines which in the original are independent, and thus the movement of the poem is changed. In these lines of Chapman, for instance, from Sarpedon's speech to Glaucus, in the twelfth book of the Iliad:

> O friend, if keeping back
> Would keep back age from us, and death, and that we might not wrack
> In this life's human sea at all, but that deferring now
> We shunn'd death ever, — nor would I half this vain valour show,
> Nor glorify a folly so, to wish thee to advance;
> But since we *must* go, though not here, and that besides the chance
> Propos'd now, there are infinite fates, &c.

here the necessity of making the line,

> Nor glorify a folly so, to wish thee to advance;

rhyme with the line which follows it, entirely changes and spoils the movement of the passage.

> Οὔτε κεν αὐτὸς ἐνὶ πρώτοισι μαχοίμην
> οὔτε κε σὲ στέλλοιμι μάχην ἐς κυδιάνειραν·*

> Neither would I myself go forth to fight with the foremost,
> Nor would I urge thee on to enter the glorious battle:

says Homer; there he stops, and begins an opposed movement:

* *Iliad*, xii, 324.

νῦν δ'—ἔμπης γὰρ κῆρες ἐφεστᾶσιν θανάτοιο—

But—for a thousand fates of death stand close to us always—

this line, in which Homer wishes to go away with the most marked rapidity from the line before, Chapman is forced, by the necessity of rhyming, intimately to connect with the line before.

But since we *must* go, though not here, and that besides the chance—

the moment the word *chance* strikes our ear, we are irresistibly carried back to *advance* and to the whole previous line, which, according to Homer's own feeling, we ought to have left behind us entirely, and to be moving farther and farther away from.

Rhyme certainly, by intensifying antithesis, can intensify separation, and this is precisely what Pope does; but this balanced rhetorical antithesis, though very effective, is entirely un-Homeric. And this is what I mean by saying that Pope fails to render Homer, because he does not render his plainness and directness of style and diction. Where Homer marks separation by moving away, Pope marks it by antithesis. No passage could show this better than the passage I have just quoted, on which I will pause for a moment.

Robert Wood, whose Essay on the Genius of Homer is mentioned by Goethe as one of the books which fell into his hands when his powers were first developing themselves, and strongly interested him,

relates of this passage a striking story. He says that in 1762, at the end of the Seven Years' War, being then Under-Secretary of State, he was directed to wait upon the President of the Council, Lord Granville, a few days before he died, with the preliminary articles of the Treaty of Paris. "I found him," he continues, "so languid, that I proposed postponing my business for another time; but he insisted that I should stay, saying, it could not prolong his life to neglect his duty; and repeating the following passage out of Sarpedon's speech, he dwelled with particular emphasis on the third line, which recalled to his mind the distinguishing part he had taken in public affairs:

ὦ πέπον, εἰ μὲν γὰρ πόλεμον περὶ τόνδε φυγόντε
αἰεὶ δὴ μέλλοιμεν ἀγήρω τ' ἀθανάτω τε
*ἔσσεσθ', οὔτε κεν αὐτὸς ἐνὶ πρώτοισι μαχοίμην,**
οὔτε κε σὲ στέλλοιμι μάχην ἐς κυδιάνειραν·
νῦν δ'—ἔμπης γὰρ Κῆρες ἐφεστᾶσιν θανάτοιο
μυρίαι, ἃς οὐκ ἔστι φυγεῖν βρότον οὐδ' ὑπαλύξαι —
ἴομεν. . . .

His Lordship repeated the last word several times with a calm and determinate resignation; and after a serious pause of some minutes, he desired to hear the Treaty read, to which he listened with great attention, and recovered spirits enough to declare the approbation of a dying statesman (I use his own

* These are the words on which Lord Granville "dwelled with particular emphasis."

words) 'on the most glorious war, and most honourable peace, this nation ever saw.'" *

I quote this story, first, because it is interesting as exhibiting the English aristocracy at its very height of culture, lofty spirit, and greatness, towards the middle of the last century. I quote it, secondly, because it seems to me to illustrate Goethe's saying which I mentioned, that our life, in Homer's view of it, represents a conflict and a hell; and it brings out, too, what there is tonic and fortifying in this doctrine. I quote it, lastly, because it shows that the passage is just one of those in translating which Pope will be at his best, a passage of strong emotion and oratorical movement, not of simple narrative or description.

Pope translates the passage thus:

> Could all our care elude the gloomy grave
> Which claims no less the fearful than the brave,
> For lust of fame I should not vainly dare
> In fighting fields, nor urge thy soul to war:
> But since, alas! ignoble age must come,
> Disease, and death's inexorable doom;
> The life which others pay, let us bestow,
> And give to fame, what we to nature owe.

Nothing could better exhibit Pope's prodigious talent; and nothing, too, could be better in its own way. But, as Bentley said, "You must not call it Homer." One feels that Homer's thought has passed through a literary and rhetorical crucible, and come

* Robert Wood, *Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer*, London, 1775; p. vii.

out highly intellectualised; come out in a form which strongly impresses us, indeed, but which no longer impresses us in the same way as when it was uttered by Homer. The antithesis of the last two lines:

> The life which others pay, let us bestow,
> And give to fame, what we to nature owe:

is excellent, and is just suited to Pope's heroic couplet; but neither the antithesis itself, nor the couplet which conveys it, is suited to the feeling or to the movement of the Homeric ἴομεν.

A literary and intellectualised language is, however, in its own way well suited to grand matters; and Pope, with a language of this kind and his own admirable talent, comes off well enough as long as he has passion, or oratory, or a great crisis, to deal with. Even here, as I have been pointing out, he does not render Homer; but he and his style are in themselves strong. It is when he comes to level passages, passages of narrative or description, that he and his style are sorely tried, and prove themselves weak. A perfectly plain direct style can of course convey the simplest matter as naturally as the grandest; indeed, it must be harder for it, one would say, to convey a grand matter worthily and nobly, than to convey a common matter, as alone such a matter should be conveyed, plainly and simply. But the style of Rasselas is incomparably better fitted to describe a sage philosophising than a soldier lighting his camp-fire.

The style of Pope is not the style of Rasselas; but it is equally a literary style, equally unfitted to describe a simple matter with the plain naturalness of Homer.

Every one knows the passage at the end of the eighth book of the Iliad, where the fires of the Trojan encampment are likened to the stars. It is very far from my wish to hold Pope up to ridicule, so I shall not quote the commencement of the passage, which in the original is of great and celebrated beauty, and in translating which Pope has been singularly and notoriously unfortunate. But the latter part of the passage, where Homer leaves the stars, and comes to the Trojan fires, treats of the plainest, most matter-of-fact subject possible, and deals with this, as Homer always deals with every subject, in the plainest and most straightforward style. "So many in number, between the ships and the streams of Xanthus, shone forth in front of Troy the fires kindled by the Trojans. There were kindled a thousand fires in the plain; and by each one there sate fifty men in the light of the blazing fire. And the horses, munching white barley and rye, and standing by the chariots, waited for the bright-throned Morning.*

In Pope's translation, this plain story becomes the following:

> So many flames before proud Ilion blaze,
> And brighten glimmering Xanthus with their rays:
> The long reflections of the distant fires
> Gleam on the walls, and tremble on the spires.

* *Iliad*, viii, 560.

A thousand piles the dusky horrors gild,
And shoot a shady lustre o'er the field.
Full fifty guards each flaming pile attend,
Whose umber'd arms, by fits, thick flashes send;
Loud neigh the coursers o'er their heaps of corn,
And ardent warriors wait the rising morn.

It is for passages of this sort, which, after all, form the bulk of a narrative poem, that Pope's style is so bad. In elevated passages he is powerful, as Homer is powerful, though not in the same way; but in plain narrative, where Homer is still powerful and delightful, Pope, by the inherent fault of his style, is ineffective and out of taste. Wordsworth says somewhere, that wherever Virgil seems to have composed "with his eye on the object," Dryden fails to render him. Homer invariably composes "with his eye on the object," whether the object be a moral or a material one: Pope composes with his eye on his style, into which he translates his object, whatever it is. That, therefore, which Homer conveys to us immediately, Pope conveys to us through a medium. He aims at turning Homer's sentiments pointedly and rhetorically; at investing Homer's description with ornament and dignity. A sentiment may be changed by being put into a pointed and oratorical form, yet may still be very effective in that form; but a description, the moment it takes its eyes off that which it is to describe, and begins to think of ornamenting itself, is worthless.

Therefore, I say, the translator of Homer should

penetrate himself with a sense of the plainness and directness of Homer's style; of the simplicity with which Homer's thought is evolved and expressed. He has Pope's fate before his eyes, to show him what a divorce may be created even between the most gifted translator and Homer by an artificial evolution of thought and a literary cast of style.

Chapman's style is not artificial and literary like Pope's, nor his movement elaborate and self-retarding like the Miltonic movement of Cowper. He is plain-spoken, fresh, vigorous, and to a certain degree, rapid; and all these are Homeric qualities. I cannot say that I think the movement of his fourteen-syllable line, which has been so much commended, Homeric; but on this point I shall have more to say by and bye, when I come to speak of Mr. Newman's metrical exploits. But it is not distinctly anti-Homeric, like the movement of Milton's blank verse; and it has a rapidity of its own. Chapman's diction, too, is generally good, that is, appropriate to Homer; above all, the syntactical character of his style is appropriate. With these merits, what prevents his translation from being a satisfactory version of Homer? Is it merely the want of literal faithfulness to his original, imposed upon him, it is said, by the exigences of rhyme? Has this celebrated version, which has so many advantages, no other and deeper defect than that? Its author is a poet, and a poet, too, of the Elizabethan age; the golden age of English literature as it is

called, and on the whole truly called; for, whatever be the defects of Elizabethan literature, (and they are great), we have no development of our literature to compare with it for vigour and richness. This age, too, showed what it could do in translating, by producing a master-piece, its version of the Bible.

Chapman's translation has often been praised as eminently Homeric. Keats's fine sonnet in its honour everyone knows; but Keats could not read the original, and therefore could not really judge the translation. Coleridge, in praising Chapman's version, says at the same time, "it will give you small idea of Homer." But the grave authority of Mr. Hallam pronounces this translation to be "often exceedingly Homeric;" and its latest editor boldly declares, that by what, with a deplorable style, he calls "his own innative Homeric genius," Chapman "has thoroughly identified himself with Homer;" and that "we pardon him even for his digressions, for they are such as we feel Homer himself would have written."

I confess that I can never read twenty lines of Chapman's version without recurring to Bentley's cry, "This is not Homer!" and that from a deeper cause than any unfaithfulness occasioned by the fetters of rhyme.

I said that there were four things which eminently distinguished Homer, and with a sense of which Homer's translator should penetrate himself as fully

as possible. One of these four things was, the plainness and directness of Homer's ideas. I have just been speaking of the plainness and directness of his style; but the plainness and directness of the contents of his style, of his ideas themselves, is not less remarkable. But as eminently as Homer is plain, so eminently is the Elizabethan literature in general, and Chapman in particular, fanciful. Steeped in humours and fantasticality up to its very lips, the Elizabethan age, newly arrived at the free use of the human faculties after their long term of bondage and delighting to exercise them freely, suffers from its own extravagance in this first exercise of them, can hardly bring itself to see an object quietly or to describe it temperately. Happily, in the translation of the Bible, the sacred character of their original inspired the translators with such respect, that they did not dare to give the rein to their own fancies in dealing with it. But, in dealing with works of profane literature, in dealing with poetical works above all, which highly stimulated them, one may say that the minds of the Elizabethan translators were *too* active; that they could not forbear importing so much of their own, and this of a most peculiar and Elizabethan character, into their original, that they effaced the character of the original itself.

Take merely the opening pages to Chapman's translation, the introductory verses, and the dedications. You will find:

An Anagram of the name of our Dread Prince,
My most gracious and sacred Mæcenas,
Henry Prince of Wales,
Our Sunn, Heyr, Peace, Life:

Henry, son of James the First, to whom the work is dedicated. Then comes an address,

To the sacred Fountain of Princes,
Sole Empress of Beauty and Virtue, Anne Queen
Of England, &c.

All the Middle Age, with its grotesqueness, its conceits, its irrationality, is still in these opening pages; they by themselves are sufficient to indicate to us what a gulf divides Chapman from the "clearest-soul'd" of poets, from Homer; almost as great a gulf as that which divides him from Voltaire. Pope has been sneered at for saying that Chapman writes "somewhat as one might imagine Homer himself to have written before he arrived at years of discretion." But the remark is excellent: Homer expresses himself like a man of adult reason, Chapman like a man whose reason has not yet cleared itself. For instance, if Homer had had to say of a poet, that he hoped his merit was now about to be fully established in the opinion of good judges, he was as incapable of saying this as Chapman says it — "Though truth in her very nakedness sits in so deep a pit, that from Gades to Aurora, and Ganges, few eyes can sound her, I hope yet those few here will so discover and confirm that the date being out of her darkness in this

morning of our poet, he shall now gird his temples with the sun"—I say, Homer was as incapable of saying this in that manner, as Voltaire himself would have been. Homer, indeed, has actually an affinity with Voltaire in the unrivalled clearness and straightforwardness of his thinking; in the way in which he keeps to one thought at a time, and puts that thought forth in its complete natural plainness, instead of being led away from it by some fancy striking him in connection with it, and being beguiled to wander off with this fancy till his original thought, in its natural reality, knows him no more. What could better show us how gifted a race was this Greek race? The same member of it has not only the power of profoundly touching that natural heart of humanity which it is Voltaire's weakness that he cannot reach, but can also address the understanding with all Voltaire's admirable simplicity and rationality.

My limits will not allow me to do more than shortly illustrate, from Chapman's version of the Iliad, what I mean when I speak of this vital difference between Homer and an Elizabethan poet in the quality of their thought; between the plain simplicity of the thought of the one, and the curious complexity of the thought of the other. As in Pope's case, I carefully abstain from choosing passages for the express purpose of making Chapman appear ridiculous; Chapman, like Pope, merits in

himself all respect, though he too, like Pope, fails to render Homer.

In that tonic speech of Sarpedon, of which I have said so much, Homer, you may remember, has:

εἰ μὲν γὰρ, πόλεμον περὶ τόνδε φυγόντε,
αἰεὶ δὴ μέλλοιμεν ἀγήρω τ' ἀθανάτω τε
ἔσσεσθ' —

if, indeed, but once *this* battle avoided,
We were for ever to live without growing old and immortal —

Chapman cannot be satisfied with this, but must add a fancy to it:

if keeping back
Would keep back age from us, and death, and *that we might not wrack*
In this life's human sea at all;

and so on. Again; in another passage which I have before quoted, where Zeus says to the horses of Peleus:

τί σφῶϊ δόμεν Πηλῆϊ ἀνάκτι
θνητῷ; ὑμεῖς δ'ἐστὸν ἀγήρω τ' ἀθανάτω τε·*

Why gave we you to royal Peleus, to a mortal? but ye are without old age, and immortal;

Chapman sophisticates this into:

Why gave we you t' a mortal king, when immortality
And *incapacity of age so dignifies your states?*

Again; in the speech of Achilles to his horses, where Achilles, according to Homer, says simply, "Take heed that ye bring your master safe back to the host of the Danaans, in some other sort than the last

* *Iliad*, xvii, 443.

time, when the battle is ended," Chapman sophisticates this into:

When, with blood, for this day's fast observ'd, revenge shall yield
Our heart satiety, bring us off.

In Hector's famous speech, again, at his parting from Andromache, Homer makes him say: "Nor does my own heart so bid me," (to keep safe behind the walls), "since I have learned to be staunch always, and to fight among the foremost of the Trojans, busy on behalf of my father's great glory, and my own." * In Chapman's hands this becomes:

The spirit I first did breathe
Did never teach me that; much less, since the contempt of death
Was settled in me, *and my mind knew what a worthy was,*
Whose office is to lead in fight, and give no danger pass
Without improvement. In this fire must Hector's trial shine:
Here must his country, father, friends, be in him made divine.

You see how ingeniously Homer's plain thought is *tormented,* as the French would say, here. Homer goes on: "For well I know this in my mind and in my heart, the day will be, when sacred Troy shall perish:"

ἔσσεται ἦμαρ, ὅτ' ἄν ποτ' ὀλώλῃ Ἴλιος ἱρή.

Chapman makes this:

And such a *stormy* day shall come, in mind and soul I know,
When sacred Troy *shall shed her tow'rs, for tears of overthrow.*

I might go on for ever, but I could not give you a better illustration than this last, of what I mean

* *Iliad,* vi, 444.

by saying that the Elizabethan poet fails to render Homer because he cannot forbear to interpose a play of thought between his object and its expression. Chapman translates his object into Elizabethan, as Pope translates it into the Augustan of Queen Anne; both convey it to us through a medium. Homer, on the other hand, sees his object and conveys it to us immediately.

And yet, in spite of this perfect plainness and directness of Homer's style, in spite of this perfect plainness and directness of his ideas, he is eminently *noble;* he works as entirely in the grand style, he is as grandiose, as Phidias, or Dante, or Michael Angelo. This is what makes his translators despair. "To give relief," says Cowper, "to prosaic subjects," (such as dressing, eating, drinking, harnessing, travelling, going to bed), that is, to treat such subjects nobly, in the grand style, "without seeming unreasonably tumid, is extremely difficult." It *is* difficult, but Homer has done it; Homer is precisely the incomparable poet he is, because he has done it. His translator must not be tumid, must not be artificial, must not be literary; true: but then also he must not be common-place, must not be ignoble. I have shown you how translators of Homer fail by wanting rapidity, by wanting simplicity of style, by wanting plainness of thought: in a second lecture I will show you how a translator fails by wanting nobility.

II.

I MUST repeat what I said in beginning, that the translator of Homer ought steadily to keep in mind where lies the real test of the success of his translation, what judges he is to try to satisfy. He is to try to satisfy *scholars*, because scholars alone have the means of really judging him. A scholar may be a pedant, it is true, and then his judgment will be worthless; but a scholar may also have poetical feeling, and then he can judge him truly; whereas all the poetical feeling in the world will not enable a man who is not a scholar to judge him truly. For the translator is to reproduce Homer, and the scholar alone has the means of knowing that Homer who is to be reproduced. He knows him but imperfectly, for he is separated from him by time, race, and language; but he alone knows him at all. Yet people speak as if there were two real tribunals in this matter—the scholar's tribunal, and that of the general public. They speak as if the scholar's judgment was one thing, and the general public's judgment another; both with their shortcomings, both with their liability to error; but both to be regarded by the

translator. The translator who makes verbal literalness his chief care "will," says a writer in the National Review whom I have already quoted, "be appreciated by the scholar accustomed to test a translation rigidly by comparison with the original, to look perhaps with excessive care to finish in detail rather than boldness and general effect, and find pardon even for a version that seems bare and bald, so it be scholastic and faithful." But, if the scholar in judging a translation looks to detail rather than to general effect, he judges it pedantically and ill. The appeal, however, lies not from the pedantic scholar to the general public, which can only like or dislike Chapman's version, or Pope's, or Mr. Newman's, but cannot *judge* them; it lies from the pedantic scholar to the scholar who is not pedantic, who knows that Homer is Homer by his general effect, and not by his single words, and who demands but one thing in a translation — that it shall, as nearly as possible, reproduce for him the *general effect* of Homer. This, then, remains the one proper aim of the translator: to reproduce on the intelligent scholar, as nearly as possible, the general effect of Homer. Except so far as he reproduces this, he loses his labour, even though he may make a spirited Iliad of his own, like Pope, or translate Homer's Iliad word for word, like Mr. Newman. If his proper aim were to stimulate in any manner possible the general public, he might be right in

following Pope's example; if his proper aim were to help schoolboys to construe Homer, he might be right in following Mr. Newman's. But it is not: his proper aim is, I repeat it yet once more, to reproduce on the intelligent scholar, as nearly as he can, the general effect of Homer.

When, therefore, Cowper says, "My chief boast is that I have adhered closely to my original;" when Mr. Newman says, "My aim is to retain every peculiarity of the original, to be *faithful*, exactly as is the case with the draughtsman of the Elgin marbles;" their real judge only replies: "It may be so; reproduce then upon us, reproduce the effect of Homer, as a good copy reproduces the effect of the Elgin marbles."

When, again, Mr. Newman tells us that "by an exhaustive process of argument and experiment" he has found a metre which is at once the metre of "the modern Greek epic," and a metre "like in moral genius" to Homer's metre, his judge has still but the same answer for him: "It may be so; reproduce then on our ear something of the effect produced by the movement of Homer."

But what is the general effect which Homer produces on Mr. Newman himself? because, when we know this, we shall know whether he and his judges are agreed at the outset, whether we may expect him, if he can reproduce the effect he feels, if his hand does not betray him in the execution, to

satisfy his judges and to succeed. If, however, Mr. Newman's impression from Homer is something quite different from that of his judges, then it can hardly be expected that any amount of labour or talent will enable him to reproduce for them *their* Homer.

Mr. Newman does not leave us in doubt as to the general effect which Homer makes upon him. As I have told you what is the general effect which Homer makes upon me—that of a most rapidly moving poet, that of a poet most plain and direct in his style, that of a poet most plain and direct in his ideas, that of a poet eminently noble—so Mr. Newman tells us his general impression of Homer. "Homer's style," he says, "is direct, popular, forcible, quaint, flowing, garrulous." Again; "Homer rises and sinks with his subject, is prosaic when it is tame, is low when it is mean."

I lay my finger on four words in these two sentences of Mr. Newman, and I say that the man who could apply those words to Homer can never render Homer truly. The four words are these; *quaint, garrulous, prosaic, low.* Search the English language for a word which does not apply to Homer, and you could not fix on a better than *quaint,* unless perhaps you fixed on one of the other three.

Again; "to translate Homer suitably," says Mr. Newman, "we need a diction sufficiently antiquated to obtain pardon of the reader for its frequent home-'liness." "I am concerned," he says again, "with the

artistic problem of attaining a plausible aspect of moderate antiquity, while remaining easily intelligible." And, again, he speaks of "the more antiquated style suited to this subject." Quaint! antiquated!—but to whom? Sir Thomas Browne is quaint, and the diction of Chaucer is antiquated: does Mr. Newman suppose that Homer seemed quaint to Sophocles, when he read him, as Sir Thomas Browne seems quaint to us, when we read him? or that Homer's diction seemed antiquated to Sophocles, as Chaucer's diction seems antiquated to us? But we cannot really know, I confess, how Homer seemed to Sophocles: well then, to those who can tell us how he seems to them, to the living scholar, to our only present witness on this matter—does Homer make on the Provost of Eton, when he reads him, the impression of a poet quaint and antiquated? does he make this impression on Professor Thompson, or Professor Jowett? When Shakspeare says, "The princes *orgulous*," meaning "the proud princes," we say, "This is antiquated;" when he says of the Trojan gates, that they,

> With massy staples
> And corresponsive and fulfilling bolts
> *Sperr* up the sons of Troy—

we say, "This is both quaint and antiquated." But does Homer ever compose in a language which produces on the scholar at all the same impression as this language which I have quoted from Shakspeare? Never once. Shakspeare is quaint and antiquated in

the lines which I have just quoted; but Shakspeare, need I say it? can compose, when he likes, when he is at his best, in a language perfectly simple, perfectly intelligible; in a language which, in spite of the two centuries and a half which part its author from us, stops us or surprises us as little as the language of a contemporary. And Homer has not Shakspeare's variations: Homer always composes as Shakspeare composes at his best; Homer is always simple and intelligible, as Shakspeare is often; Homer is never quaint and antiquated, as Shakspeare is sometimes.

When Mr. Newman says that Homer is garrulous, he seems, perhaps, to depart less widely from the common opinion than when he calls him quaint; for is there not Horace's authority for asserting that "the good Homer sometimes nods," *bonus dormitat Homerus?* and a great many people have come, from the currency of this well-known criticism, to represent Homer to themselves as a diffuse old man, with the full-stocked mind, but also with the occasional slips and weaknesses, of old age. Horace has said better things than his "bonus dormitat Homerus;" but he never meant by this, as I need not remind anyone who knows the passage, that Homer was garrulous, or anything of the kind. Instead, however, of either discussing what Horace meant, or discussing Homer's garrulity as a general question, I prefer to bring to my mind some style which *is* garrulous, and

to ask myself, to ask you, whether anything at all of the impression made by that style, is ever made by the style of Homer. The mediæval romancers, for instance, are garrulous; the following, to take out of a thousand instances the first which comes to hand, is in a garrulous manner. It is from the romance of Richard Cœur de Lion:

> Of my tale be not a-wondered!
> The French says he slew an hundred
> (Whereof is made this English saw)
> Or he rested him any thraw.
> Him followed many an English knight
> That eagerly holp him for to fight —

and so on. Now the manner of that composition I call garrulous; everyone will feel it to be garrulous; everyone will understand what is meant when it is called garrulous. Then I ask the scholar—does Homer's manner ever make upon you, I do not say, the same impression of its garrulity as that passage, but does it make, ever for one moment, an impression in the slightest way resembling, in the remotest degree akin to, the impression made by that passage of the mediæval poet? I have no fear of the answer.

I follow the same method with Mr. Newman's two other epithets, *prosaic*, and *low*. "Homer rises and sinks with his subject," says Mr. Newman; "is prosaic when it is tame, is low when it is mean." First I say, Homer is never, in any sense, to be with truth

called prosaic; he is never to be called low. He does not rise and sink with his subject; on the contrary, his manner invests his subject, whatever his subject be, with nobleness. Then I look for an author of whom it may with truth be said, that he "rises and sinks with its subject, is prosaic when it is tame, is low when it is mean." Defoe is eminently such an author; of Defoe's manner it may with perfect precision be said, that it follows his matter; his lifelike composition takes its character from the facts which it conveys, not from the nobleness of the composer. In Moll Flanders and Colonel Jack, Defoe is undoubtedly prosaic when his subject is tame, low when his subject is mean. Does Homer's manner in the Iliad, I ask the scholar, ever make upon him an impression at all like the impression made by Defoe's manner in Moll Flanders and Colonel Jack? Does it not, on the contrary, leave him with an impression of nobleness, even when it deals with Thersites or with Irus?

Well then, Homer is neither quaint, nor garrulous, nor prosaic, nor mean; and Mr. Newman, in seeing him so, sees him differently from those who are to judge Mr. Newman's rendering of him. By pointing out how a wrong conception of Homer affects Mr. Newman's translation, I hope to place in still clearer light those four cardinal truths which I pronounce essential for him who would have a right conception of Homer; that Homer is rapid, that he

is plain and direct in word and style, that he is plain and direct in his ideas, and that he is noble.

Mr. Newman says that in fixing on a style for suitably rendering Homer, as he conceives him, he "alights on the delicate line which separates the *quaint* from the *grotesque*." "I ought to be quaint," he says, "I ought not to be grotesque." This is a most unfortunate sentence. Mr. Newman is grotesque, which he himself says he ought not to be; and he ought not to be quaint, which he himself says he ought to be.

"No two persons will agree," says Mr. Newman, "as to where the quaint ends and the grotesque begins;" and perhaps this is true. But, in order to avoid all ambiguity in the use of the two words, it is enough to say, that most persons would call an expression which produced on them a very strong sense of its incongruity, and which violently surprised them, *grotesque;* and an expression, which produced on them a slighter sense of its incongruity, and which more gently surprised them, *quaint.* Using the two words in this manner, I say, that when Mr. Newman translates Helen's words to Hector in the sixth book,

Δᾶερ ἐμεῖο, κυνὸς κακομηχάνου, ὀκρυοέσσης* —

O, brother thou of me, who am a mischief-working vixen,
A numbing horror—

he is grotesque; that is, he expresses himself in a

* *Iliad*, vi, 344.

manner which produces on us a very strong sense of its incongruity, and which violently surprises us. I say, again, that when Mr. Newman translates the common line,

Τὴν δ' ἠμείβετ' ἔπειτα μέγας κορυθαίολος Ἕκτωρ—

Great Hector of the motley helm then spake to her responsive —

or the common expression ἐϋκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοί, "dapper-greav'd Achaians"—he is quaint; that is, he expresses himself in a manner which produces on us a slighter sense of incongruity, and which more gently surprises us. But violent and gentle surprise are alike far from the scholar's spirit when he reads in Homer κυνὸς κακομηχάνου, or, κορυθαίολος Ἕκτωρ, or, ἐϋκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοί. These expressions no more seem odd to him than the simplest expressions in English. He is not more checked by any feeling of strangeness, strong or weak, when he reads them, than when he reads in an English book "the painted savage," or, "the phlegmatic Dutchman." Mr. Newman's renderings of them must, therefore, be wrong expressions in a translation of Homer; because they excite in the scholar, their only competent judge, a feeling quite alien to that excited in him by what they profess to render.

Mr. Newman, by expressions of this kind, is false to his original in two ways. He is false to him inasmuch

as he is ignoble; for a noble air, and a grotesque air, the air of the address,

Δᾶερ ἐμεῖο, κυι ὸς κακομηχάνου, ὀκρυοέσσης —

and the air of the address,

O, brother thou of me, who am a mischief-working vixen,
A numbing horror —

are just contrary the one to the other: and he is false to him inasmuch as he is odd; for an odd diction like Mr. Newman's, and a perfectly plain natural diction like Homer's — "dapper-greav'd Achaians" and *ἐϋκνήμιδες Ἀχαιοί*—are also just contrary the one to the other. Where, indeed, Mr. Newman got his diction, with whom he can have lived, what can be his test of antiquity and rarity for words, are questions which I ask myself with bewilderment. He has prefixed to his translation a list of what he calls "the more antiquated or rarer words" which he has used. In this list appear, on the one hand, such words as *doughty, grisly, lusty, noisome, ravin,* which are familiar, one would think, to all the world; on the other hand, such words as *bragly,* meaning, Mr. Newman tells us, "proudly fine;" *bulkin,* "a calf;" *plump,* "a mass;" and so on. "I am concerned," says Mr. Newman, "with the artistic problem of attaining a plausible aspect of moderate antiquity, while remaining easily intelligible." But it seems to me that *lusty* is not antiquated; and

that *bragly* is not a word readily understood. That this word, indeed, and *bulkin*, may have "a plausible aspect of moderate antiquity," I admit; but that they are "easily intelligible," I deny.

Mr. Newman's syntax has, I say it with pleasure, a much more Homeric cast than his vocabulary; his syntax, the mode in which his thought is evolved, although not the actual words in which it is expressed, seems to me right in its general character, and the best feature of his version. It is not artificial or rhetorical like Cowper's syntax or Pope's: it is simple, direct, and natural, and so far it is like Homer's. It fails, however, just where, from the inherent fault of Mr. Newman's conception of Homer, one might expect it to fail—it fails in nobleness. It presents the thought in a way which is something more than unconstrained — over-familiar; something more than easy — free and easy. In this respect it is like the movement of Mr. Newman's version, like his rhythm; for this, too, fails, in spite of some good qualities, by not being noble enough; this, while it avoids the faults of being slow and elaborate, falls into a fault in the opposite direction, and is slip-shod. Homer presents his thought naturally; but when Mr. Newman has,

A thousand fires along the plain, *I say*, that night were burning —

he presents his thought familiarly; in a style which may be the genuine style of ballad-poetry, but which

is not the style of Homer. Homer moves freely; but when Mr. Newman has,

> Infatuate! oh that thou wert lord to some other army * —

he gives himself too much freedom; he leaves us too much to do for his rhythm ourselves, instead of giving to us a rhythm like Homer's, easy indeed, but mastering our ear with a fulness of power which is irresistible.

I said that a certain style might be the genuine style of ballad-poetry, but yet not the style of Homer. The analogy of the ballad is ever present to Mr. Newman's thoughts in considering Homer; and perhaps nothing has more caused his faults than this analogy—this popular, but, it is time to say, this erroneous analogy. "The moral qualities of Homer's style," says Mr. Newman, "being like to those of the English ballad, we need a metre of the same genius. Only those metres, which by the very possession of these qualities are liable to degenerate into *doggerel*, are suitable to reproduce the ancient epic." "The style of Homer," he says in a passage which I have before quoted, "is direct, popular,

* From the reproachful answer of Ulysses to Agamemnon, who had proposed an abandonment of their expedition. This is one of the "tonic" passages of the Iliad, so I quote it:

> Ah, unworthy king, some other inglorious army
> Should'st thou command, not rule over *us*, whose portion for ever
> Zeus hath made it, from youth right up to age, to be winding
> Skeins of grievous wars, till every soul of us perish.
>
> *Iliad*, xiv, 84.

forcible, quaint, flowing, garrulous: in all these respects it is similar to the old English ballad." Mr. Newman, I need not say, is by no means alone in this opinion. "The most really and truly Homeric of all the creations of the English muse is," says Mr. Newman's critic in the National Review, "the ballad-poetry of ancient times; and the association between metre and subject is one that it would be true wisdom to preserve." "It is confessed," says Chapman's last editor, Mr. Hooper, "that the fourteen-syllable verse," (that is, a ballad-verse), "is peculiarly fitting for Homeric translation." And the editor of Dr. Maginn's clever and popular Homeric Ballads assumes it as one of his author's greatest and most indisputable merits, that he was "the first who consciously realised to himself the truth that Greek ballads can be really represented in English only by a similar measure."

This proposition that Homer's poetry is *ballad-poetry*, analogous to the well-known ballad-poetry of the English and other nations, has a certain small portion of truth in it, and at one time probably served a useful purpose, when it was employed to discredit the artificial and literary manner in which Pope and his school rendered Homer. But it has been so extravagantly over-used, the mistake which it was useful in combating has so entirely lost the public favour, that it is now much more important to insist on the large part of error contained in it,

than to extol its small part of truth. It is time to say plainly that, whatever the admirers of our old ballads may think, the supreme form of epic poetry, the genuine Homeric mould, is not the form of the Ballad of Lord Bateman. I have myself shown the broad difference between Milton's manner and Homer's; but, after a course of Mr. Newman and Dr. Maginn, I turn round in desperation upon them and upon the balladists who have misled them, and I exclaim: "Compared with you, Milton is Homer's double; there is, whatever you may think, ten thousand times more of the real strain of Homer in,

> Blind Thamyris, and blind Mæonides,
> And Tiresias, and Phineus, prophets old —

than in,

> Now Christ thee save, thou proud portèr,
> Now Christ thee save and see * —

or in,

> While the tinker did dine, he had plenty of wine."†

For Homer is not only rapid in movement, simple in style, plain in language, natural in thought; he is also, and above all, *noble*. I have advised the translator not to go into the vexed question of Homer's identity. Yet I will just remind him, that the grand argument—or rather, not argument, for

* From the ballad of *King Estmere*, in Perey's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry;* i, 69; (edit. of 1767).

† *Reliques;* i, 241.

the matter affords no data for arguing, but the grand source from which conviction, as we read the Iliad, keeps pressing in upon us, that there is one poet of the Iliad, one Homer—is precisely this nobleness of the poet, this grand manner; we feel that the analogy drawn from other joint compositions does not hold good here, because those works do not bear, like the Iliad, the magic stamp of a master; and the moment you have *anything* less than a masterwork, the co-operation or consolidation of several poets becomes possible, for talent is not uncommon; the moment you have *much* less than a masterwork, they become easy, for mediocrity is everywhere. I can imagine fifty Bradies joined with as many Tates to make the New Version of the Psalms. I can imagine several poets having contributed to any one of the old English ballads in Percy's collection. I can imagine several poets, possessing, like Chapman, the Elizabethan vigour and the Elizabethan mannerism, united with Chapman to produce his version of the Iliad. I can imagine several poets, with the literary knack of the twelfth century, united to produce the Nibelungen Lay in the form in which we have it—a work which the Germans, in their joy at discovering a national epic of their own, have rated vastly higher than it deserves. And lastly, though Mr. Newman's translation of Homer bears the strong mark of his own idiosyncracy, yet I can imagine Mr. Newman and a

school of adepts trained by him in his art of poetry, jointly producing that work, so that Aristarchus himself should have difficulty in pronouncing which line was the master's, and which a pupil's. But I cannot imagine several poets, or one poet, joined with Dante in the composition of his "Inferno," though many poets have taken for their subject a descent into Hell. Many artists, again, have represented Moses; but there is only one Moses of Michael Angelo. So the insurmountable obstacle to believing the Iliad a consolidated work of several poets is this—that the work of great masters is unique; and the Iliad has a great master's genuine stamp, and that stamp is *the grand style.*

Poets who cannot work in the grand style, instinctively seek a style in which their comparative inferiority may feel itself at ease, a manner which may be, so to speak, indulgent to their inequalities. The ballad-style offers to an epic poet, quite unable to fill the canvas of Homer, or Dante, or Milton, a canvas which he is capable of filling. The ballad-measure is quite able to give due effect to the vigour and spirit which its employer, when at his very best, may be able to exhibit; and, when he is not at his best, when he is a little trivial, or a little dull, it will not betray him, it will not bring out his weaknesses into broad relief. This is a convenience; but it is a convenience which the ballad-style purchases by resigning all pretensions to the highest, to the grand

manner. It is true of its movement, as it is *not* true of Homer's, that it is "liable to degenerate into doggerel." It is true of its "moral qualities," as it is *not* true of Homer's, that "quaintness" and "garrulity" are among them. It is true of its employers, as it is *not* true of Homer, that they "rise and sink with their subject, are prosaic when it is tame, are low when it is mean." For this reason the ballad-style and the ballad-measure are eminently *in*appropriate to render Homer. Homer's manner and movement are always both noble and powerful: the ballad-manner and movement are often either jaunty and smart, so not noble; or jog-trot and humdrum, so not powerful.

The Nibelungen Lay affords a good illustration of the qualities of the ballad-manner. Based on grand traditions, which had found expression in a grand lyric poetry, the German epic poem of the Nibelungen Lay, though it is interesting, and though it has good passages, is itself anything rather than a grand poem. It is a poem of which the composer is, to speak the truth, a very ordinary mortal, and often, therefore, like other ordinary mortals, very prosy. It is in a measure which eminently adapts itself to this commonplace personality of its composer, which has much the movement of the well-known measures of Tate and Brady, and can jog on, for hundreds of lines at a time, with a level ease which reminds one of Sheridan's saying that easy writing may be often

such hard reading. But, instead of occupying myself with the Nibelungen Lay, I prefer to look at the ballad-style as directly applied to Homer, in Chapman's version and Mr. Newman's, and in the Homeric Ballads of Dr. Maginn.

First I take Chapman. I have already shown that Chapman's conceits are un-Homeric, and that his rhyme is un-Homeric; I will now show how his manner and movement are un-Homeric. Chapman's diction, I have said, is generally good; but it must be called good with this reserve, that, though it has Homer's plainness and directness, it often offends him who knows Homer by wanting Homer's nobleness. In a passage which I have already quoted, the address of Zeus to the horses of Achilles, where Homer has,

> ἆ δειλώ, τί σφῶϊ δόμεν Πηλῆϊ ἄνακτι
> θνητῷ; ὑμεῖς δ' ἐστὸν ἀγήρω τ' ἀθανάτω τε·
> ἦ ἵνα δυστήνοισι μετ' ἀνδράσιν ἄλγε' ἔχητον; *

Chapman has,

> "*Poor wretched beasts*," said he,
> "Why gave we you to a mortal king, when immortality
> And incapacity of age so dignifies your states?
> Was it to haste † the miseries pour'd out on human fates?"

There are many faults in this rendering of Chapman's, but what I particularly wish to notice in it is the expression "Poor wretched beasts," for

* *Iliad*, xvii, 443.

† All the editions which I have seen have "haste," but the right reading must certainly be "taste."

ἃ δειλώ. This expression just illustrates the difference between the ballad-manner and Homer's. The ballad-manner—Chapman's manner—is, I say, pitched sensibly lower than Homer's. The ballad-manner requires that an expression shall be plain and natural, and then it asks no more. Homer's manner requires that an expression shall be plain and natural, but it also requires that it shall be noble. Ἅ δειλώ is as plain, as simple as "Poor wretched beasts;" but it is also noble, which "Poor wretched beasts" is not. "Poor wretched beasts" is, in truth, a little over-familiar: but this is no objection to it for the ballad-manner; it is good enough for the old English ballad, good enough for the Nibelungen Lay, good enough for Chapman's Iliad, good enough for Mr. Newman's Iliad, good enough for Dr. Maginn's Homeric Ballads; but it is not good enough for Homer.

To feel that Chapman's measure, though natural, is not Homeric; that, though tolerably rapid, it has not Homer's rapidity; that it has a jogging rapidity rather than a flowing rapidity; and a movement familiar rather than nobly easy, one has only, I think, to read half a dozen lines in any part of his version. I prefer to keep as much as possible to passages which I have already noticed, so I will quote the conclusion of the nineteenth book, where Achilles answers his horse Xanthus, who has prophesied his death to him:*

* *Iliad*, xix, 419.

Achilles, far in rage,
Thus answer'd him: — It fits not thee thus proudly to presage
My overthrow. I know myself it is my fate to fall
Thus far from Phthia; yet that fate shall fail to vent her gall
Till mine vent thousands.—These words said, he fell to horrid deeds,
Gave dreadful signal, and forthright made fly his one-hoof'd steeds.

For what regards the manner of this passage, the words "Achilles Thus answer'd him," and "I know myself it is my fate to fall Thus far from Phthia," are in Homer's manner, and all the rest is out of it. But for what regards its movement: who, after being jolted by Chapman through such verse as this:

These words said, he fell to horrid deeds,
Gave dreadful signal, and forthright made fly his one-hoof'd steeds—

who does not feel the vital difference of the movement of Homer —

ἦ ῥα, καὶ ἐν πρώτοις ἰάχων ἔχε μώνυχας ἵππους?

To pass from Chapman to Dr. Maginn. His Homeric Ballads are vigorous and genuine poems in their own way; they are not one continual falsetto, like the pinchbeck Roman Ballads of Lord Macaulay; but just because they are ballads in their manner and movement, just because, to use the words of his applauding editor, Dr. Maginn has "consciously realised to himself the truth that Greek ballads can be really represented in English only by a similar manner"— just for this very reason they are not at all Homeric, they have not the least in the world the manner of Homer. There is a celebrated in-

cident in the nineteenth book of the Odyssey, the recognition by the old nurse Eurycleia of a scar on the leg of her master Ulysses, who has entered his own hall as an unknown wanderer, and whose feet she has been set to wash. "Then she came near," says Homer, "and began to wash her master; and straightway she recognised a scar which he had got in former days from the white tusk of a wild boar, when he went to Parnassus unto Autolycus and the sons of Autolycus, his mother's father and brethren."* This, "really represented" by Dr. Maginn, in "a measure similar" to Homer's, becomes:

> And scarcely had she begun to wash
> Ere she was aware of the grisly gash
> Above his knee that lay.
> It was a wound from a wild-boar's tooth,
> All on Parnassus' slope,
> Where he went to hunt in the days of his youth
> With his mother's sire —

and so on. That is the true ballad-manner, no one can deny; "all on Parnassus' slope" is, I was going to say, the true ballad-slang; but never again shall I be able to read,

> *νίζε δ' ἄρ' ἅσσον ἰοῦσα ἄναχθ' ἑόν· αὐτίκα δ' ἔγνω*
> *οὐλήν·*

without having the detestable dance of Dr. Maginn's,

> And scarcely had she begun to wash
> Ere she was aware of the grisly gash —

* *Odyssey*, xix, 392.

jigging in my ears, to spoil the effect of Homer, and to torture me. To apply that manner and that rhythm to Homer's incidents, is not to imitate Homer, but to travesty him.

Lastly I come to Mr. Newman. His rhythm, like Chapman's and Dr. Maginn's, is a ballad-rhythm, but with a modification of his own. "Holding it," he tells us, "as an axiom, that rhyme must be abandoned," he found, on abandoning it, "an unpleasant void until he gave a double ending to the verse." In short, instead of saying,

> Good people all with one accord
> Give ear unto my *tale* —

Mr. Newman would say,

> Good people all with one accord
> Give ear unto my *story*.

A recent American writer * gravely observes that for his countrymen this rhythm has a disadvantage in being like the rhythm of the American national air "Yankee Doodle," and thus provoking ludicrous associations. "Yankee Doodle" is not our national air: for us, Mr. Newman's rhythm has not this disadvantage. He himself gives us several plausible reasons why this rhythm of his really ought to be successful: let us examine how far it *is* successful.

Mr. Newman joins to a bad rhythm so bad a

* Mr. Marsh, in his *Lectures on the English Language*, New York, 1860; p. 520.

diction, that it is difficult to distinguish exactly whether in any given passage it is his words or his measure which produces a total impression of such an unpleasant kind. But with a little attention we may analyse our total impression, and find the share which each element has in producing it. To take the passage which I have so often mentioned, Sarpedon's speech to Glaucus. Mr. Newman translates this as follows:

O gentle friend! if thou and I, from this encounter 'scaping,
Hereafter might for ever be from Eld and Death exempted
As heav'nly gods, not I in sooth would fight among the foremost,
Nor liefly thee would I advance to man-ennobling battle.
Now, — sith ten thousand shapes of Death do any-gait pursue us
Which never mortal may evade, though sly of foot and nimble; —
Onward! and glory let us earn, or glory yield to some one. —

Could all our care elude the gloomy grave
Which claims no less the fearful than the brave —

I am not going to quote Pope's version over again, but I must remark in passing, how much more, with all Pope's radical difference of manner from Homer, it gives us of the real effect of,

εἰ μὲν γὰρ, πόλεμον περὶ τόνδε φυγόντε —

than Mr. Newman's lines. And now, why are Mr. Newman's lines faulty? They are faulty, first, because as a matter of diction, the expressions "O gentle friend," "eld," "in sooth," "liefly," "advance," "man-ennobling," "sith," "any-gait," and "sly of foot," are all bad; some of them worse than others, but

all bad: that is, they all of them as here used excite in the scholar, their sole judge — excite, I will boldly affirm, in Professor Thompson or Professor Jowett — a feeling totally different from that excited in them by the words of Homer which these expressions profess to render. The lines are faulty, secondly, because, as a matter of rhythm, any and every line among them has to the ear of the same judges, (I affirm it with equal boldness), a movement as unlike Homer's movement in the corresponding line as the single words are unlike Homer's words. Οὔτε κε σέ στέλλοιμι μάχην ἐς κυδιάνειραν — "Nor liefly thee would I advance to man-ennobling battle" — for whose ear do those two rhythms produce impressions of, to use Mr. Newman's own words, "similar moral genius?"

I will by no means make search in Mr. Newman's version for passages likely to raise a laugh; that search, alas! would be far too easy. I will quote but one other passage from him, and that a passage where the diction is comparatively inoffensive, in order that disapproval of the words may not unfairly heighten disapproval of the rhythm. The end of the nineteenth book, the answer of Achilles to his horse Xanthus, Mr. Newman gives thus:

"Chesnut! why bodest death to me? from thee this was not needed.
Myself right surely know alsó, that 'tis my doom to perish,
From mother and from father dear apart, in Troy; but never
Pause will I make of war, until the Trojans be glutted."
He spake, and yelling, held afront the single-hoofed horses.

Here Mr. Newman calls Xanthus *Chesnut*, indeed, as he calls Balius *Spotted*, and Podarga *Spry-foot*; which is as if a Frenchman were to call Miss Nightingale *Madlle. Rossignol*, or Mr. Bright *M. Clair*. And several other expressions, too — "yelling," "held afront," "single-hoofed" — leave, to say the very least, much to be desired. Still, for Mr. Newman, the diction of this passage is pure. All the more clearly appears the profound vice of a rhythm, which, with comparatively few faults of words, can leave a sense of such incurable alienation from Homer's manner as, "Myself right surely know alsó that 'tis my doom to perish" — compared with the, *εὖ νύ τοι οἶδα καὶ αὐτὸς, ὅ μοι μόρος ἐνθάδ' ὀλέσθαι* —of Homer.

But so deeply-seated is the difference between the ballad-manner and Homer's, that even a man of the highest powers, even a man of the greatest vigour of spirit and of true genius—the Coryphæus of balladists, Sir Walter Scott—fails with a manner of this kind to produce an effect at all like the effect of Homer. "I am not so rash," declares Mr. Newman, "as to say that if *freedom* be given to rhyme as in Walter Scott's poetry" — Walter Scott, "by far the most Homeric of our poets," as in another place he calls him — "a genius may not arise who will translate Homer into the melodies of Marmion." "The *truly* classical and the *truly* romantic," says Dr. Maginn, "are one; the moss-trooping Nestor reappears in the moss-

trooping heroes of Percy's Reliques;" and a description by Scott, which he quotes, he calls "graphic and therefore Homeric." He forgets our fourth axiom—that Homer is not *only* graphic; he is also noble, and has the grand style. Human nature under like circumstances is probably in all ages much the same; and so far it may be said that "the truly classical and the truly romantic are one;" but it is of little use to tell us this, because we know the human nature of other ages only through the representations of them which have come down to us, and the classical and the romantic modes of representation are so far from being "one," that they remain eternally distinct, and have created for us a separation between the two worlds which they respectively represent. Therefore to call Nestor the "moss-trooping Nestor" is absurd, because, though Nestor may possibly have been much the same sort of man as many a moss-trooper, he has yet come to us through a mode of representation so unlike that of Percy's Reliques, that, instead of "reappearing in the moss-trooping heroes" of these poems, he exists in our imagination as something utterly unlike them, and as belonging to another world. So the Greeks in Shakspeare's Troilus and Cressida are no longer the Greeks whom we have known in Homer, because they come to us through a mode of representation of the romantic world. But I must not forget Scott.

I suppose that when Scott is in what may be

called full ballad-swing, no one will hesitate to pronounce his manner neither Homeric, nor the grand manner. When he says, for instance,

> I do not rhyme to that dull elf
> Who cannot image to himself—*

and so on, any scholar will feel that *this* is not Homer's manner. But let us take Scott's poetry at its best; and when it is at its best, it is undoubtedly very good indeed:

> Tunstall lies dead upon the field,
> His life-blood stains the spotless shield:
> Edmund is down — my life is reft —
> The Admiral alone is left.
> Let Stanley charge with spur of fire —
> With Chester charge, and Lancashire,
> Full upon Scotland's central host,
> Or victory and England's lost.†

That is, no doubt, as vigorous as possible, as spirited as possible; it is exceedingly fine poetry. And still I say, it is not in the grand manner, and therefore it is not like Homer's poetry. Now, how shall I make him who doubts this feel that I say true; that these lines of Scott are essentially neither in Homer's style, nor in the grand style? I may point out to him that the movement of Scott's lines, while it is rapid, is also at the same time what the French call *saccadé*, its rapidity is "jerky;" whereas Homer's rapidity is a flowing rapidity. But this is something external and material; it is but the outward and

* *Marmion*, canto vi, 38. † *Marmion*, canto vi, 29.

visible sign of an inward and spiritual diversity. I may discuss what, in the abstract, constitutes the grand style; but that sort of general discussion never much helps our judgment of particular instances. I may say that the presence or absence of the grand style can only be spiritually discerned; and this is true, but to plead this looks like evading the difficulty. My best way is to take eminent specimens of the grand style, and to put them side by side with this of Scott. For example, when Homer says:

> ἀλλά, φίλος, θάνε καὶ σύ· τίη ὀλυφύρεαι οὕτως;
> κάτθανε καὶ Πάτροκλος, ὅπερ σέο πολλὸν ἀμείνων *—

that is in the grand style. When Virgil says:

> Disce, puer, virtutem ex me verumque laborem;
> Fortunam ex aliis †—

that is in the grand style. When Dante says:

> Lascio lo fele, et vo pei dolci pomi
> Promessi a me per lo verace Duca;
> Ma fino al centro pria convien ch' io tomi ‡—

that is in the grand style. When Milton says:

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* "Be content, good friend, die also thou! why lamentest thou thyself on this wise? Patroclus, too, died, who was a far better than thou." — *Iliad*, xxi, 106.

† "From me, young man, learn nobleness of soul and true effort; learn success from others." — *Æneid*, xii, 435.

‡ "I leave the gall of bitterness, and I go for the apples of sweetness promised unto me by my faithful Guide; but far as the centre it behoves me first to fall." — *Hell*, xvi, 61.

His form had not yet lost
All her original brightness, nor appear'd
Less than archangel ruin'd, and the excess
Of glory obscur'd *—

that, finally, is in the grand style. Now let any one, after repeating to himself these four passages, repeat again the passage of Scott, and he will perceive that there is something in style which the four first have in common, and which the last is without; and this something is precisely the grand manner. It is no disrespect to Scott to say that he does not attain to this manner in his poetry; to say so, is merely to say that he is not among the five or six supreme poets of the world. Among these he is not; but, being a man of far greater powers than the ballad-poets, he has tried to give to their instrument a compass and an elevation which it does not naturally possess, in order to enable him to come nearer to the effect of the instrument used by the great epic poets — an instrument which he felt he could not truly use — and in this attempt he has but imperfectly succeeded. The poetic style of Scott is — (it becomes necessary to say so when it is proposed to "translate Homer into the melodies of Marmion") — it is, tried by the highest standards, a bastard epic style; and that is why, out of his own powerful hands, it has had so little success. It is a less natural, and therefore a less good style, than the original ballad-style; while

* *Paradise Lost*, i, 591.

it shares with the ballad-style the inherent incapacity of rising into the grand style, of adequately rendering Homer. Scott is certainly at his best in his battles. Of Homer you could not say this; he is not better in his battles than elsewhere; but even between the battle-pieces of the two there exists all the difference which there is between an able work and a masterpiece.

> Tunstall lies dead upon the field,
> His life-blood stains the spotless shield:
> Edmund is down — my life is reft —
> The Admiral alone is left.—

— "For not in the hands of Diomede the son of Tydeus rages the spear, to ward off destruction from the Danaans; neither as yet have I heard the voice of the son of Atreus, shouting out of his hated mouth; but the voice of Hector the slayer of men bursts round me, as he cheers on the Trojans; and they with their yellings fill all the plain, overcoming the Achaians in the battle." — I protest that, to my feeling, Homer's performance, even through that pale and far-off shadow of a prose translation, still has a hundred times more of the grand manner about it, than the original poetry of Scott.

Well, then, the ballad-manner and the ballad-measure, whether in the hands of the old ballad poets, or arranged by Chapman, or arranged by Mr. Newman, or, even, arranged by Sir Walter Scott, cannot worthily render Homer. And for one reason:

Homer is plain, so are they; Homer is natural, so are they; Homer is spirited, so are they; but Homer is sustainedly noble, and they are not. Homer and they are both of them natural, and therefore touching and stirring; but the grand style, which is Homer's, is something more than touching and stirring; it can form the character, it is edifying. The old English balladist may stir Sir Philip Sidney's heart like a trumpet, and this is much: but Homer, but the few artists in the grand style, can do more; they can refine the raw natural man, they can transmute him. So it is not without cause that I say, and say again, to the translator of Homer: "Never for a moment suffer yourself to forget our fourth fundamental proposition, *Homer is noble.*" For it is seen how large a share this nobleness has in producing that general effect of his, which it is the main business of a translator to *re*produce.

I shall have to try your patience yet once more upon this subject, and then my task will be completed. I have shown what the four axioms respecting Homer which I have laid down, exclude, what they bid a translator not to do; I have still to show what they supply, what positive help they can give to the translator in his work. I will even, with their aid, myself try my fortune with some of those passages of Homer which I have already noticed; not indeed with any confidence that I more than others can succeed in adequately rendering Homer,

but in the hope of satisfying competent judges, in the hope of making it clear to the future translator, that I at any rate follow a right method, and that, in coming short, I come short from weakness of execution, not from original vice of design. This is why I have so long occupied myself with Mr. Newman's version; that, apart from all faults of execution, his original design was wrong, and that he has done us the good service of declaring that design in its naked wrongness. To bad practice he has prefixed the bad theory which made the practice bad; he has given us a false theory in his preface, and he has exemplified the bad effects of that false theory in his translation. It is because his starting-point is so bad that he runs so badly; and to save others from taking so false a starting-point, may be to save them from running so futile a course.

Mr. Newman, indeed, says in his preface, that if any one dislikes his translation, "he has his easy remedy; to keep aloof from it." But Mr. Newman is a writer of considerable and deserved reputation; he is also a Professor of the University of London, an institution which by its position and by its merits acquires every year greater importance. It would be a very grave thing if the authority of so eminent a Professor led his students to misconceive entirely the chief work of the Greek world; that work which, whatever the other works of classical antiquity have to give us, gives it more abundantly than they all.

The eccentricity, too, the arbitrariness, of which Mr. Newman's conception of Homer offers so signal an example, are not a peculiar failing of Mr. Newman's own; in varying degrees, they are the great defect of English intellect, the great blemish of English literature. Our literature of the eighteenth century, the literature of the school of Dryden, Addison, Pope, Johnson, is a long reaction against this eccentricity, this arbitrariness: that reaction perished by its own faults, and its enemies are left once more masters of the field. It is much more likely that any new English version of Homer will have Mr. Newman's faults than Pope's. Our present literature, which is very far, certainly, from having the spirit and power of Elizabethan genius, yet has in its own way these faults, eccentricity and arbitrariness, quite as much as the Elizabethan literature ever had. They are the cause that, while upon none, perhaps, of the modern literatures has so great a sum of force been expended as upon the English literature, at the present hour this literature, regarded not as an object of mere literary interest but as a living intellectual instrument, ranks only third in European effect and importance among the literatures of Europe; it ranks after the literatures of France and Germany. Of these two literatures, as of the intellect of Europe in general, the main effort, for now many years, has been a *critical* effort; the endeavour, in all branches of knowledge—theo-

logy, philosophy, history, art, science — to see the object as in itself it really is. But, owing to the presence in English literature of this eccentric and arbitrary spirit, owing to the strong tendency of English writers to bring to the consideration of their object some individual fancy, almost the last thing for which one would come to English literature is just that very thing which now Europe most desires — *criticism*. It is useful to notice any signal manifestation of those faults, which thus limit and impair the action of our literature. And therefore I have pointed out, how widely, in translating Homer, a man even of real ability and learning may go astray, unless he brings to the study of this clearest of poets one quality in which our English authors, with all their great gifts, are apt to be somewhat wanting — simple lucidity of mind.

III.

HOMER is rapid in his movement, Homer is plain in his words and style, Homer is simple in his ideas, Homer is noble in his manner. Cowper renders him ill because he is slow in his movement, and elaborate in his style; Pope renders him ill because he is artificial both in his style and in his words; Chapman renders him ill because he is fantastic in his ideas; Mr. Newman renders him ill because he is odd in his words and ignoble in his manner. All four translators diverge from their original at other points besides those named; but it is at the points thus named that their divergence is greatest. For instance, Cowper's diction is not as Homer's diction, nor his nobleness as Homer's nobleness; but it is in movement and grammatical style that he is most unlike Homer. Pope's rapidity is not of the same sort as Homer's rapidity, nor are his plainness of ideas and his nobleness as Homer's plainness of ideas and nobleness: but it is in the artificial character of his style and diction that he is most unlike Homer. Chapman's movement, words, style, and manner, are often far enough from resembling Homer's movement,

words, style, and manner; but it is the fantasticality of his ideas which puts him farthest from resembling Homer. Mr. Newman's movement, grammatical style, and ideas, are a thousand times in strong contrast with Homer's; still it is by the oddness of his diction and the ignobleness of his manner that he contrasts with Homer the most violently.

Therefore the translator must not say to himself: "Cowper is noble, Pope is rapid, Chapman has a good diction, Mr. Newman has a good cast of sentence; I will avoid Cowper's slowness, Pope's artificiality, Chapman's conceits, Mr. Newman's oddity; I will take Cowper's dignified manner, Pope's impetuous movement, Chapman's vocabulary, Mr. Newman's syntax, and so make a perfect translation of Homer." Undoubtedly in certain points the versions of Chapman, Cowper, Pope, and Mr. Newman, all of them have merit; some of them very high merit, others a lower merit; but even in these points they have none of them precisely the same kind of merit as Homer, and therefore the new translator, even if he can imitate them in their good points, will still not satisfy his judge the scholar, who asks him for Homer and Homer's kind of merit, or, at least, for as much of them as it is possible to give.

So the translator really has no good model before him for any part of his work, and has to invent everything for himself. He is to be rapid in movement, plain in speech, simple in thought, and noble; and

how he is to be either rapid, or plain, or simple, or noble, no one yet has shown him. I shall try to-day to establish some practical suggestions which may help the translator of Homer's poetry to comply with the four grand requirements which we make of him.

His version is to be rapid; and of course, to make a man's poetry rapid, as to make it noble, nothing can serve him so much as to have, in his own nature, rapidity and nobleness. *It is the spirit that quickeneth;* and no one will so well render Homer's swift-flowing movement as he who has himself something of the swift-moving spirit of Homer. Yet even this is not quite enough. Pope certainly had a quick and darting spirit, as he had, also, real nobleness; yet Pope does not render the movement of Homer. To render this the translator must have, besides his natural qualifications, an appropriate metre.

I have sufficiently shown why I think all forms of our ballad-metre unsuited to Homer. It seems to me to be beyond question that, for epic poetry, only three metres can seriously claim to be accounted capable of the grand style. Two of these will at once occur to every one—the ten-syllable, or so-called *heroic*, couplet, and blank verse. I do not add to these the Spenserian stanza, although Dr. Maginn, whose metrical eccentricities I have already criticised, pronounces this stanza the one right measure for a translation of Homer. It is enough to observe, that if Pope's couplet, with the simple system of corre-

spondences that its rhymes introduce, changes the movement of Homer, in which no such correspondences are found, and is therefore a bad measure for a translator of Homer to employ, Spenser's stanza, with its far more intricate system of correspondences, must change Homer's movement far more profoundly, and must therefore be for the translator a far worse measure than the couplet of Pope. Yet I will say, at the same time, that the verse of Spenser is more fluid, slips more easily and quickly along, than the verse of almost any other English poet.

> By this the northern waggoner had set
> His seven-fold team behind the steadfast star
> That was in ocean waves yet never wet,
> But firm is fixt, and sendeth light from far
> To all that in the wide deep wandering are *;

one cannot but feel that English verse has not often moved with the fluidity and sweet ease of these lines. It is possible that it may have been this quality of Spenser's poetry which made Dr. Maginn think that the stanza of The Faery Queen must be a good measure for rendering Homer. This it is not: Spenser's verse is fluid and rapid, no doubt, but there are more ways than one of being fluid and rapid, and Homer is fluid and rapid in quite another way than Spenser. Spenser's manner is no more Homeric than is the manner of the one modern inheritor of Spenser's beautiful gift; the poet, who evidently caught from

* *The Faery Queen*, Canto ii, Stanza 1.

Spenser his sweet and easy-slipping movement, and who has exquisitely employed it; a Spenserian genius, nay, a genius by natural endowment richer probably than even Spenser; that light which shines so unexpected and without fellow in our century, an Elizabethan born too late, the early lost and admirably gifted Keats.

I say then that there are really but three metres —the ten-syllable couplet, blank verse, and a third metre which I will not yet name, but which is neither the Spenserian stanza nor any form of ballad-verse —between which, as vehicles for Homer's poetry, the translator has to make his choice. Every one will at once remember a thousand passages in which both the ten-syllable couplet and blank verse prove themselves to have nobleness. Undoubtedly the movement and manner of this;

> Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
> But leave to Heaven the measure and the choice—

are noble. Undoubtedly, the movement and manner of this;

> High on a throne of royal state, which far
> Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind—

are noble also. But the first is in a rhymed metre; and the unfitness of a rhymed metre for rendering Homer I have already shown. I will observe, too, that the fine couplet which I have quoted comes out of a satire, a didactic poem; and that it is in didactic

poetry that the ten-syllable couplet has most successfully essayed the grand style. In narrative poetry this metre has succeeded best when it essayed a sensibly lower style, the style of Chaucer, for instance; whose narrative manner, though a very good and sound manner, is certainly neither the grand manner nor the manner of Homer.

The rhymed ten-syllable couplet being thus excluded, blank verse offers itself for the translator's use. The first kind of blank verse which naturally occurs to us is the blank verse of Milton, which has been employed, with more or less modification, by Mr. Cary in translating Dante, by Cowper and by Mr. Wright in translating Homer. How noble this metre is in Milton's hands, how completely it shows itself capable of the grand, nay of the grandest, style, I need not say. To this metre, as used in the Paradise Lost, our country owes the glory of having produced one of the only two poetical works in the grand style which are to be found in the modern languages; the Divine Comedy of Dante is the other. England and Italy here stand alone; Spain, France and Germany have produced great poets, but neither Calderon, nor Corneille, nor Schiller, nor even Goethe, has produced a body of poetry in the true grand style, in the sense in which the style of the body of Homer's poetry, or Pindar's, or Sophocles's, is grand. But Dante has, and so has Milton; and in this respect Milton possesses a distinction which even Shakspeare,

undoubtedly the supreme poetical power in our literature, does not share with him. Not a tragedy of Shakspeare but contains passages in the worst of all styles, the affected style; and the grand style, although it may be harsh, or obscure, or cumbrous, or overlaboured, is never affected. In spite, therefore, of objections which may justly be urged against the plan and treatment of the Paradise Lost, in spite of its possessing, certainly, a far less enthralling force of interest to attract and to carry forward the reader than the Iliad or the Divine Comedy, it fully deserves, it can never lose, its immense reputation; for, like the Iliad and the Divine Comedy, nay in some respects to a higher degree than either of them, it is in the grand style.

But the grandeur of Milton is one thing, and the grandeur of Homer is another. Homer's movement, I have said again and again, is a flowing, a rapid movement; Milton's, on the other hand, is a laboured, a self-retarding movement. In each case, the movement, the metrical cast, corresponds with the mode of evolution of the thought, with the syntactical cast, and is indeed determined by it. Milton charges himself so full with thought, imagination, knowledge, that his style will hardly contain them. He is too full-stored to show us in much detail one conception, one piece of knowledge; he just shows it to us in a pregnant allusive way, and then he presses on to another; and all this fulness, this pressure, this condensation, this

self-constraint, enters into his movement, and makes it what it is — noble, but difficult and austere. Homer is quite different; he says a thing, and says it to the end, and then begins another, while Milton is trying to press a thousand things into one. So that whereas, in reading Milton, you never lose the sense of laborious and condensed fulness, in reading Homer you never lose the sense of flowing and abounding ease. With Milton line runs into line, and all is straitly bound together: with Homer line runs off from line, and all hurries away onward. Homer begins, Μῆνιν ἄειδε, Θεά — at the second word announcing the proposed action: Milton begins:

> Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
> With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
> Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
> Sing, heavenly muse —

so chary of a sentence is he, so resolute not to let it escape him till he has crowded into it all he can, that it is not till the thirty-ninth word in the sentence that he will give us the key to it, the word of action, the verb. Milton says:

> O for that warning voice, which he, who saw
> The Apocalypse, heard cry in heaven aloud —

he is not satisfied, unless he can tell us, all in one sentence, and without permitting himself to actually mention the name, that the man who had the warning voice

was the same man who saw the Apocalypse. Homer would have said, "O for that warning voice, which *John* heard" — and if it had suited him to say that John also saw the Apocalypse, he would have given us that in another sentence. The effect of this allusive and compressed manner of Milton is, I need not say, often very powerful; and it is an effect which other great poets have often sought to obtain much in the same way: Dante is full of it, Horace is full of it; but wherever it exists, it is always an un-Homeric effect. "The losses of the heavens," says Horace, "fresh moons speedily repair; we, when we have gone down where the pious Æneas, where the rich Tullus, and Ancus are—*pulvis et umbra sumus.*" * He never actually says *where* we go to; he only indicates it by saying that it is that place where Æneas, Tullus, and Ancus, are. But Homer, when he has to speak of going down to the grave, says definitely: ἐς Ἠλύσιον πεδίον— *dθάνατοι πέμψουσιν*† — "The immortals shall send thee *to the Elysian plain;*" and it is not till after he has definitely said this, that he adds, that it is there that the abode of departed worthies is placed: ὅθι ξανθὸς Ῥαδάμανθυς— "Where the yellow-hair'd Rhadamanthus is." Again; Horace, having to say that punishment sooner or later overtakes crime, says it thus:

Raro antecedentem scelestum
Deseruit pede Pœna claudo.‡

* *Odes*, IV, vii, 13. † *Odyssey*, iv, 563. ‡ *Odes*, III, ii, 31.

The thought itself of these lines is familiar enough to Homer and Hesiod; but neither Homer nor Hesiod, in expressing it, could possibly have so complicated its expression as Horace complicates it, and purposely complicates it, by his use of the word *deseruit*. I say that this complicated evolution of the thought necessarily complicates the movement and rhythm of a poet; and that the Miltonic blank verse, of course the first model of blank verse which suggests itself to an English translator of Homer, bears the strongest marks of such complication, and is therefore entirely unfit to render Homer.

If blank verse is used in translating Homer, it must be a blank verse of which English poetry, naturally swayed much by Milton's treatment of this metre, offers at present hardly any examples. It must not be Cowper's blank verse, who has studied Milton's pregnant manner with such effect, that, having to say of Mr. Throckmorton that he spares his avenue, although it is the fashion with other people to cut down theirs, he says that Benevolus "reprieves The obsolete prolixity of shade." It must not be Mr. Tennyson's blank verse.

> For all experience is an arch, wherethro'
> Gleams that untravell'd world, whose distance fades
> For ever and for ever, as we gaze —

it is no blame to the thought of those lines, which belongs to another order of ideas than Homer's, but

it is true, that Homer would certainly have said of them, "It is to consider too curiously to consider so." It is no blame to their rhythm, which belongs to another order of movement than Homer's, but it is true, that these three lines by themselves take up nearly as much time as a whole book of the Iliad. No; the blank verse used in rendering Homer must be a blank verse of which perhaps the best specimens are to be found in some of the most rapid passages of Shakspeare's plays—a blank verse which does not dovetail its lines into one another, and which habitually ends its lines with monosyllables. Such a blank verse might no doubt be very rapid in its movement, and might perfectly adapt itself to a thought plainly and directly evolved; and it would be interesting to see it well applied to Homer. But the translator who determines to use it, must not conceal from himself that in order to pour Homer into the mould of this metre, he will have entirely to break him up and melt him down, with the hope of then successfully composing him afresh; and this is a process which is full of risks. It may, no doubt, be the real Homer that issues new from it; it is not certain beforehand that it cannot be the real Homer, as it is certain that from the mould of Pope's couplet or Cowper's Miltonic verse it cannot be the real Homer that will issue; still, the chances of disappointment are great. The result of such an attempt to renovate the old poet

may be an Æson; but it may also, and more probably will, be a Pelias.

When I say this, I point to the metre which seems to me to give the translator the best chance of preserving the general effect of Homer — that third metre which I have not yet expressly named, the hexameter. I know all that is said against the use of hexameters in English poetry; but it comes only to this, that, among us, they have not yet been used on any considerable scale with success. *Solvitur ambulando:* this is an objection which can best be met by *producing* good English hexameters. And there is no reason in the nature of the English language why it should not adapt itself to hexameters as well as the German language does; nay, the English language, from its greater rapidity, is in itself better suited than the German for them. The hexameter, whether alone or with the pentameter, possesses a movement, an expression, which no metre hitherto in common use amongst us possesses, and which I am convinced English poetry, as our mental wants multiply, will not always be content to forego. Applied to Homer, this metre affords to the translator the immense support of keeping him more nearly than any other metre to Homer's movement; and, since a poet's movement makes so large a part of his general effect, and to reproduce this general effect is at once the translator's indispensable business and so difficult for him, it is a great thing to

have this part of your model's general effect already given you in your metre, instead of having to get it entirely for yourself.

These are general considerations; but there are also one or two particular considerations which confirm me in the opinion that for translating Homer into English verse the hexameter should be used. The most successful attempt hitherto made at rendering Homer into English, the attempt in which Homer's general effect has been best retained, is an attempt made in the hexameter measure. It is a version of the famous lines in the third book of the Iliad, which end with that mention of Castor and Pollux from which Mr. Ruskin extracts the sentimental consolation already noticed by me. The author is the accomplished Provost of Eton, Dr. Hawtrey; and this performance of his must be my excuse for having taken the liberty to single him out for mention, as one of the natural judges of a translation of Homer, along with Professor Thompson and Professor Jowett, whose connection with Greek literature is official. The passage is short;* and Dr.

* So short, that I quote it entire:

Clearly the rest I behold of the dark-ey'd sons of Achaia;
Known to me well are the faces of all; their names I remember;
Two, two only remain, whom I see not among the commanders,
Castor fleet in the car — Polydeukes brave with the cestus —
Own dear brethren of mine — one parent lov'd us as infants.
Are they not here in the host, from the shores of lov'd Lacedæmon,

Hawtrey's version of it is suffused with a pensive grace which is, perhaps, rather more Virgilian than Homeric; still it is the one version of any part of the Iliad which in some degree reproduces for me the original effect of Homer: it is the best, and it is in hexameters.

This is one of the particular considerations that

Or, tho' they came with the rest in ships that bound thro' the waters,
Dare they not enter the fight or stand in the council of Heroes,
All for fear of the shame and the taunts my crime has awaken'd?
So said she;—they long since in Earth's soft arms were reposing,
There, in their own dear land, their Father-land, Lacedæmon.

English Hexameter Translations, London, 1847; p. 242.

I have changed Dr. Hawtrey's "Kastor," "Lakedaimon," back to the familiar "Castor," "Lacedemon," in obedience to my own rule that everything *odd* is to be avoided in rendering Homer, the most natural and least odd of poets. I see Mr. Newman's critic in the National Review urges our generation to bear with the unnatural effect of these rewritten Greek names, in the hope that by this means the effect of them may have to the next generation become natural. For my part, I feel no disposition to pass all my own life in the wilderness of pedantry, in order that a posterity which I shall never see may one day enter an orthographical Canaan; and, after all, the real question is this — whether our living apprehension of the Greek world is more checked by meeting in an English book about the Greeks, names not spelt letter for letter as in the original Greek, or by meeting names which make us rub our eyes and call out, "How exceedingly odd!"

The Latin names of the Greek deities raise in most cases the idea of quite distinct personages from the personages whose idea is raised by the Greek names. Hera and Juno are actually, to every scholar's imagination, two different people. So in all these cases the Latin names must, at any inconvenience, be abandoned when we are dealing with the Greek world. But I think it can be in the sensitive imagination of Mr. Grote only, that "Thucydides" raises the idea of a different man from Θουκυδίδης.

incline me to prefer the hexameter, for translating Homer, to our established metres. There is another. Most of you, probably, have some knowledge of a poem by Mr. Clough, The Bothie of Toper-na-fuosich, a long-vacation pastoral, in hexameters. The general merits of that poem I am not going to discuss: it is a serio-comic poem, and, therefore, of essentially different nature from the Iliad. Still in two things it is, more than any other English poem which I can call to mind, like the Iliad; in the rapidity of its movement, and the plainness and directness of its style. The thought in this poem is often curious and subtle, and that is not Homeric; the diction is often grotesque, and that is not Homeric. Still, by its rapidity of movement, and plain and direct manner of presenting the thought however curious in itself, this poem, which being as I say a serio-comic poem has a right to be grotesque, is grotesque *truly*, not, like Mr. Newman's version of the Iliad, *falsely*. Mr. Clough's odd epithets, "The grave man nick-nam'd Adam," "The hairy Aldrich," and so on, grow vitally and appear naturally in their place; while Mr. Newman's "dapper-greav'd Achaians," and "motley-helmed Hector," have all the air of being mechanically elaborated and artificially stuck in. Mr. Clough's hexameters are excessively, needlessly rough: still, owing to the native rapidity of this measure, and to the directness of style which so well allies itself with it, his composition produces a sense

in the reader which Homer's composition also produces, and which Homer's translator ought to *re*produce—the sense of having, within short limits of time, a large portion of human life presented to him, instead of a small portion.

Mr. Clough's hexameters are, as I have just said, too rough and irregular; and indeed a good model, on any considerable scale, of this metre, the English translator will nowhere find. He must not follow the model offered by Mr. Longfellow in his pleasing and popular poem of Evangeline; for the merit of the manner and movement of Evangeline, when they are at their best, is to be tenderly elegant; and their fault, when they are at their worst, is to be lumbering; but Homer's defect is not lumberingness, neither is tender elegance his excellence. The lumbering effect of most English hexameters is caused by their being much too dactylic*; the translator must learn to use spondees freely. Mr. Clough has done this, but he has not sufficiently observed another rule which the translator cannot follow too strictly; and that is, to have no lines which will not, as it is familiarly said, *read themselves*. This is of the last importance for rhythms with which the ear of the English public is not thoroughly acquainted. Lord

* For instance; in a version (I believe, by the late Mr. Lockhart) of Homer's description of the parting of Hector and Andromache, there occurs, in the first five lines, but one spondee besides the necessary spondees in the sixth place: in the corresponding five lines of Homer there occur ten. See *English Hexameter Translations*, 244.

Redesdale, in two papers on the subject of Greek and Roman metres, has some good remarks on the outrageous disregard of quantity in which English verse, trusting to its force of accent, is apt to indulge itself. The predominance of accent in our language is so great, that it would be pedantic not to avail oneself of it; and Lord Redesdale suggests rules which might easily be pushed too far. Still, it is undeniable that in English hexameters we generally force the quantity far too much; we rely on justification by accent with a security which is excessive. But not only do we abuse accent by shortening long syllables and lengthening short ones; we perpetually commit a far worse fault, by requiring the removal of the accent from its natural place to an unnatural one, in order to make our line scan. This is a fault, even when our metre is one which every English reader knows, and when he can see what we want and can correct the rhythm according to our wish; although it is a fault which a great master may sometimes commit knowingly to produce a desired effect, as Milton changes the natural accent on the word *Tirésias* in the line:

And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old;

and then it ceases to be a fault, and becomes a beauty. But it is a real fault, when Chapman has:

By him the golden-thron'd Queen slept, the Queen of Deities;

for in this line, to make it scan, you have to take away the accent from the word *Queen*, on which it

naturally falls, and to place it on *thron'd*, which would naturally be unaccented; and yet, after all, you get no peculiar effect or beauty of cadence to reward you. It is a real fault, when Mr. Newman has:

Infatuate! oh that thou wert lord to some other army—

for here again the reader is required, not for any special advantage to himself, but simply to save Mr. Newman trouble, to place the accent on the insignificant word *wert*, where it has no business whatever. But it is a still greater fault, when Spenser has, (to take a striking instance),

Wot ye why his mother with a veil hath covered his face?

for a hexameter; because here not only is the reader causelessly required to make havoc with the natural accentuation of the line in order to get it to run as a hexameter; but also he, in nine cases out of ten, will be utterly at a loss how to perform the process required, and the line will remain a mere monster for him. I repeat, it is advisable to construct *all* verses so that by reading them naturally—that is, according to the sense and legitimate accent—the reader gets the right rhythm; but, for English hexameters, that they be so constructed is indispensable.

If the hexameter best helps the translator to the Homeric rapidity, what style may best help him to the Homeric plainness and directness? It is the merit of a metre appropriate to your subject, that it in

some degree suggests and carries with itself a style appropriate to the subject; the elaborate and self-retarding style, which comes so naturally when your metre is the Miltonic blank verse, does not come naturally with the hexameter; is, indeed, alien to it. On the other hand, the hexameter has a natural dignity which repels both the jaunty style and the jog-trot style, to both of which the ballad-measure so easily lends itself. These are great advantages; and perhaps it is nearly enough to say to the translator who uses the hexameter that he cannot too religiously follow, in style, the inspiration of his metre. He will find that a loose and idiomatic grammar — a grammar which follows the essential rather than the formal logic of the thought — allies itself excellently with the hexameter; and that, while this sort of grammar ensures plainness and naturalness, it by no means comes short in nobleness. It is difficult to pronounce certainly what is idiomatic in the ancient literature of a language which, though still spoken, has long since entirely adopted, as modern Greek has adopted, modern idioms. Still one may, I think, clearly perceive that Homer's grammatical style is idiomatic — that it may even be called, not improperly, a loose grammatical style.*

* See for instance, in the Iliad, the loose construction of ὅστε, xvii, 658; that of ἴδοιτο, xvii, 681; that of οἵτε, xviii, 209; and the elliptical construction at xix, 42, 43; also the idiomatic construction of ἐγὼν ὅδε παρασχεῖν, xix, 140. These instances are all taken within a range of a thousand lines: any one may easily multiply them for himself.

Examples, however, of what I mean by a loose grammatical style, will be of more use to the translator if taken from English poetry than if taken from Homer. I call it, then, a loose and idiomatic grammar which Shakspeare uses in the last line of the following three:

> He's here in double trust:
> First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
> *Strong both against the deed* —

or in this:

> Wit, *whither wilt?*

What Shakspeare means is perfectly clear, clearer, probably, than if he had said it in a more formal and regular manner; but his grammar is loose and idiomatic, because he leaves out the subject of the verb "wilt" in the second passage quoted, and because, in the first, a prodigious addition to the sentence has to be, as we used to say in our old Latin grammar days, *understood*, before the word "both" can be properly parsed. So, again, Chapman's grammar is loose and idiomatic where he says: —

> Even share hath he that keeps his tent, and *he to field* doth go —

because he leaves out, in the second clause, the relative which in formal writing would be required. But Chapman here does not lose dignity by this idiomatic way of expressing himself, any more than Shakspeare loses it by neglecting to confer on "both"

the blessings of a regular government: neither loses dignity, but each gives that impression of a plain, direct, and natural mode of speaking, which Homer, too, gives, and which it is so important, as I say, that Homer's translator should succeed in giving. Cowper calls blank verse "a style farther removed than rhyme from the vernacular idiom, both in the language itself and in the arrangement of it;" and just in proportion as blank verse is removed from the vernacular idiom, from that idiomatic style which is of all styles the plainest and most natural, blank verse is unsuited to render Homer.

Shakspeare is not only idiomatic in his grammar or style, he is also idiomatic in his words or diction; and here, too, his example is valuable for the translator of Homer. The translator must not, indeed, allow himself all the liberty that Shakspeare allows himself; for Shakspeare sometimes uses expressions which pass perfectly well as he uses them, because Shakspeare thinks so fast and so powerfully, that in reading him we are borne over single words as by a mighty current; but, if our mind were less excited—and who may rely on exciting our mind like Shakspeare?—they would check us. "To grunt and sweat under a weary load;"—that does perfectly well where it comes in Shakspeare; but if the translator of Homer, who will hardly have wound our minds up to the pitch at which these words of Hamlet find them, were to employ, when he has to speak of one of Homer's

heroes under the load of calamity, this figure of "grunting" and "sweating," we should say, *He Newmanises*, and his diction would offend us. For he is to be noble; and no plea of wishing to be plain and natural can get him excused from being this: only, as he is to be also, like Homer, perfectly simple and free from artificiality, and as the use of idiomatic expressions undoubtedly gives this effect *, he should be as idiomatic as he can be without ceasing to be noble. Therefore the idiomatic language of Shakspeare — such language as, "prate of his *where-about*;" "*jump* the life to come;" "the damnation of his *taking-off*;" "his *quietus make* with a bare *bodkin*"—should be carefully observed by the translator of Homer, although in every case he will have to decide for himself whether the use, by him, of Shakspeare's liberty, will or will not clash with his indispensable duty of nobleness. He will find one English book and one only, where, as in the Iliad itself, perfect plainness of speech is allied with perfect nobleness; and that book is the Bible. No one could see this more clearly than Pope saw it: "This

* Our knowledge of Homer's Greek is hardly such as to enable us to pronounce quite confidently what is idiomatic in his diction, and what is not, any more than in his grammar; but I seem to myself clearly to recognise an idiomatic stamp in such expressions as τολυπεύειν πολέμους, xiv, 86; φάος ἐν νήεσσιν θῆηι, xvi, 94; τιν' οἴῳ ἀσπασίως αὐτῶν γόνυ κάμψειν, xix, 71; κλοτοπεύειν, xix, 149; and many others. The first-quoted expression, τολυπεύειν ἀργαλέους πολέμους, seems to me to have just about the same degree of freedom as the "*jump* the life to come," or the "*shuffle off* this mortal coil," of Shakspeare.

pure and noble simplicity," he says, "is nowhere in such perfection as in the Scripture and Homer:" yet even with Pope a woman is a "fair," a father is a "sire," and an old man a "reverend sage," and so on through all the phrases of that pseudo-Augustan, and most unbiblical, vocabulary. The Bible, however, is undoubtedly the grand mine of diction for the translator of Homer; and, if he knows how to discriminate truly between what will suit him and what will not, the Bible may afford him also invaluable lessons of style.

I said that Homer, besides being plain in style and diction, was plain in the quality of his thought. It is possible that a thought may be expressed with idiomatic plainness, and yet not be in itself a plain thought. For example, in Mr. Clough's poem, already mentioned, the style and diction are almost always idiomatic and plain, but the thought itself is often of a quality which is not plain; it is *curious*. But the grand instance of the union of idiomatic expression with curious or difficult thought is in Shakspeare's poetry. Such, indeed, is the force and power of Shakspeare's idiomatic expression, that it gives an effect of clearness and vividness even to a thought which is imperfect and incoherent; for instance, when Hamlet says,

> To take arms against a sea of troubles —

the figure there is undoubtedly most faulty, it by

no means runs on four legs; but the thing is said so freely and idiomatically, that it passes. This, however, is not a point to which I now want to call your attention; I want you to remark, in Shakspeare and others, only that which we may directly apply to Homer. I say, then, that in Shakspeare the thought is often, while most idiomatically uttered, nay, while good and sound in itself, yet of a quality which is curious and difficult; and that this quality of thought is something entirely un-Homeric. For example, when Lady Macbeth says,

> Memory, the warder of the brain,
> Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
> A limbeck only —

this figure is a perfectly sound and correct figure, no doubt; Mr. Knight even calls it a "happy" figure; but it is a *difficult* figure: Homer would not have used it. Again, when Lady Macbeth says,

> When you durst do it, then you were a man;
> And, to be more than what you were, you would
> Be so much more the man —

the thought in the two last of these lines is, when you seize it, a perfectly clear thought, and a fine thought; but it is a *curious* thought: Homer would not have used it. These are favourable instances of the union of plain style and words with a thought not plain in quality; but take stronger instances of this union — let the thought be not only not plain in quality, but highly fanciful; and you have the

Elizabethan conceits: you have, in spite of idiomatic style and idiomatic diction, everything which is most un-Homeric; you have such atrocities as this of Chapman:

> Fate shall fail to vent her gall
> Till mine vent thousands.

I say, the poets of a nation which has produced such a conceit as that, must purify themselves seven times in the fire before they can hope to render Homer. They must expel their nature with a fork, and keep crying to one another night and day: "Homer not only moves rapidly, not only speaks idiomatically; he is, also, *free from fancifulness.*"

So essentially characteristic of Homer is his plainness and naturalness of thought, that to the preservation of this in his own version the translator must without scruple sacrifice, where it is necessary, verbal fidelity to his original, rather than run any risk of producing, by literalness, an odd and unnatural effect. The double epithets so constantly occurring in Homer must be dealt with according to this rule: these epithets come quite naturally in Homer's poetry; in English poetry they, in nine cases out of ten, come, when literally rendered, quite unnaturally. I will not now discuss why this is so, I assume it as an indisputable fact that it is so; that Homer's *μερόπων ἀνθρώπων* comes to the reader as something perfectly natural, while Mr. Newman's "voice-dividing mortals" comes to him as something perfectly unnatural. Well then, as it is Homer's general effect which we are to repro-

duce, it is to be false to Homer to be so verbally faithful to him as that we lose this effect: and by the English translator Homer's double epithets must be, in many places, renounced altogether; in all places where they are rendered, rendered by equivalents which come naturally. Instead of rendering Θέτι τανύπεπλε by Mr. Newman's "Thetis trailing-rob'd," which brings to one's mind long petticoats sweeping a dirty pavement, the translator must render the Greek by English words which come as naturally to us as Milton's words when he says, "Let gorgeous Tragedy With sceptred pall come sweeping by." Instead of rendering μώνυχας ἵππους by Chapman's "one-hoof'd steeds," or Mr. Newman's "single-hoofed horses," he must speak of horses in a way which surprises us as little as Shakspeare surprises us when he says, "Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds." Instead of rendering μελιηδέα θυμόν by "life as honey pleasant," he must characterise life with the simple pathos of Gray's "Warm precincts of the cheerful day." Instead of converting ποῖόν σε ἔπος φύγεν ἕρκος ὀδόντων; into the portentous remonstrance, "Betwixt the outwork of thy teeth what word hath slipt?" he must remonstrate in English as straightforward as this of St. Peter, "Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee;" or as this of the disciples, "What is this that he saith, a little while? we cannot tell what he saith." Homer's Greek, in each of the places quoted, reads as naturally as any of those English passages; the

expression no more calls away the attention from the sense in the Greek than in the English. But when, in order to render literally in English one of Homer's double epithets, a strange unfamiliar adjective is invented—such as "voice-dividing" for μέροψ—an improper share of the reader's attention is necessarily diverted to this ancillary word, to this word which Homer never intended should receive so much notice; and a total effect quite different from Homer's is thus produced. Therefore Mr. Newman, though he does not purposely import, like Chapman, conceits of his own into the Iliad, does actually import them; for the result of his singular diction is to raise ideas, and odd ideas, not raised by the corresponding diction in Homer; and Chapman himself does no more. Cowper says, "I have cautiously avoided all terms of new invention, with an abundance of which persons of more ingenuity than judgment have not enriched our language but encumbered it;" and this criticism so exactly hits the diction of Mr. Newman, that one is irresistibly led to imagine his present appearance in the flesh to be at least his second.

A translator cannot well have a Homeric rapidity, style, diction, and quality of thought, without at the same time having what is the result of these in Homer—nobleness. Therefore I do not attempt to lay down any rules for obtaining this effect of nobleness — the effect, too, of all others the most impalpable, the most irreducible to rule, and which most

depends on the individual personality of the artist. So I proceed at once to give you, in conclusion, one or two passages in which I have tried to follow those principles of Homeric translation which I have laid down. I give them, it must be remembered, not as specimens of perfect translation, but as specimens of an attempt to translate Homer on certain principles; specimens which may very aptly illustrate those principles by falling short, as well as by succeeding.

I take first a passage of which I have already spoken, the comparison of the Trojan fires to the stars. The first part of that passage is, I have said, of splendid beauty; and to begin with a lame version of that, would be the height of imprudence in me. It is the last and more level part with which I shall concern myself. I have already quoted Cowper's version of this part in order to show you how unlike his stiff and Miltonic manner of telling a plain story is to Homer's easy and rapid manner:

> So numerous seem'd those fires the bank between
> Of Xanthus, blazing, and the fleet of Greece,
> In prospect all of Troy — .

I need not continue to the end. I have also quoted Pope's version of it, to show you how unlike his ornate and artificial manner is to Homer's plain and natural manner:

> So many flames before proud Ilion blaze,
> And brighten glimmering Xanthus with their rays;
> The long reflections of the distant fires
> Gleam on the walls, and tremble on the spires —

and much more of the same kind. I want to show you that it is possible, in a plain passage of this sort, to keep Homer's simplicity without being heavy and dull; and to keep his dignity without bringing in pomp and ornament. "As numerous as are the stars on a clear night," says Homer,

> So shone forth, in front of Troy, by the bed of Xanthus,
> Between that and the ships, the Trojans' numerous fires.
> In the plain there were kindled a thousand fires: by each one
> There sate fifty men, in the ruddy light of the fire:
> By their chariots stood the steeds, and champ'd the white barley
> While their masters sate by the fire, and waited for Morning.—

Here, in order to keep Homer's effect of perfect plainness and directness, I repeat the word "fires" as he repeats *πυρά*, without scruple; although in a more elaborate and literary style of poetry this recurrence of the same word would be a fault to be avoided. I omit the epithet of Morning, and, whereas Homer says that the steeds "waited for Morning," I prefer to attribute this expectation of Morning to the master and not to the horse. Very likely in this particular, as in any other single particular, I may be wrong: what I wish you to remark is my endeavour after absolute plainness of speech, my care to avoid anything which may the least check or surprise the reader, whom Homer does not check or surprise. Homer's lively personal familiarity with war, and with the war-horse as his master's companion, is such that, as it seems to me, his attributing to the one the other's

feelings comes to us quite naturally; but, from a poet without this familiarity, the attribution strikes as a little unnatural; and therefore, as everything the least unnatural is un-Homeric, I avoid it.

Again; in the address of Zeus to the horses of Achilles, Cowper has:

> Jove saw their grief with pity, and his brows
> Shaking, within himself thus, pensive, said.
> "Ah hapless pair! wherefore by gift divine
> Were ye to Peleus given, a mortal king,
> Yourselves immortal and from age exempt?"

There is no want of dignity here, as in the versions of Chapman and Mr. Newman, which I have already quoted; but the whole effect is much too slow. Take Pope:

> Nor Jove disdain'd to cast a pitying look
> While thus relenting to the steeds he spoke.
> "Unhappy coursers of immortal strain!
> Exempt from age and deathless now in vain;
> Did we your race on mortal man bestow
> Only, alas! to share in mortal woe?"

Here there is no want either of dignity or rapidity, but all is too artificial. "Nor Jove disdained," for instance, is a very artificial and literary way of rendering Homer's words, and so is, "coursers of immortal strain."

> Μυρομένω δ' ἄρα τώ γε ἰδὼν, ἐλέησε Κρονίων—
> And with pity the son of Saturn saw them bewailing,
> And he shook his head, and thus address'd his own bosom:
> "Ah, unhappy pair, to Peleus why did we give you,

To a mortal? but ye are without old age and immortal.
Was it that ye, with man, might have your thousands of sorrows?
For than man, indeed, there breathes no wretcheder creature,
Of all living things, that on earth are breathing and moving."

Here I will observe that the use of "own," in the second line, for the last syllable of a dactyl, and the use of "To a," in the fourth, for a complete spondee, though they do not, I think, actually spoil the run of the hexameter, are yet undoubtedly instances of that over-reliance on accent, and too free disregard of quantity, which Lord Redesdale visits with just reprehension.*

I now take two longer passages in order to try my

* It must be remembered, however, that, if we disregard quantity too much in constructing English hexameters, we also disregard accent too much in reading Greek hexameters. We read every Greek dactyl so as to make a pure dactyl of it; but, to a Greek, the accent must have hindered many dactyls from sounding as pure dactyls. When we read *αἰόλος ἵππος*, for instance, or *αἰγιόχοιο*, the dactyl in each of these cases is made by us as pure a dactyl as "Tityre," or "dignity;" but to a Greek it was not so. To him *αἰόλος* must have been nearly as impure a dactyl as "death-destin'd" is to us; and *αἰγιόχ* nearly as impure as the "dress'd his own" of my text. Nor, I think, does this right mode of pronouncing the two words at all spoil the run of the line as a hexameter. The effect of *αἰόλλος ἵππος*, (or something like that,) though not *our* effect, is not a disagreeable one. On the other hand, *κορυθαιόλος* as a paroxytonon, although it has the respectable authority of *Liddell* and *Scott's Lexicon*, (following Heyne), is certainly wrong; for then the word cannot be pronounced without throwing an accent on the first syllable as well as the third, and *μέγας κορυθαιόλλος Ἕκτωρ* would have been to a Greek as intolerable an ending for an hexameter line, as "accurst *orphanhood-destin'd* houses" would be to us. The best authorities, accordingly, accent *κορυθαίολος* as a proparoxytonon.

method more fully; but I still keep to passages which have already come under our notice. I quoted Chapman's version of some passages in the speech of Hector at his parting with Andromache. One astounding conceit will probably still be in your remembrance:

When sacred Troy shall *shed her tow'rs for tears of overthrow* —

as a translation of ὅτ' ἄν ποτ' ὀλώλῃ Ἴλιος ἱρή. I will quote a few lines which may give you, also, the key-note to the Anglo-Augustan manner of rendering this passage, and to the Miltonic manner of rendering it. What Mr. Newman's manner of rendering it would be, you can by this time sufficiently imagine for yourselves. Mr. Wright—to quote for once from his meritorious version instead of Cowper's, whose strong and weak points are those of Mr. Wright also—Mr. Wright begins his version of this passage thus:

> All these thy anxious cares are also mine,
> Partner belov'd; but how could I endure
> The scorn of Trojans and their long-rob'd wives,
> Should they behold their Hector shrink from war,
> And act the coward's part? Nor doth my soul
> Prompt the base thought.

Ex pede Herculem: you see just what the manner is. Mr. Sotheby, on the other hand, (to take a disciple of Pope instead of Pope himself), begins thus:

"What moves thee, moves my mind," brave Hector said,
"Yet Troy's upbraiding scorn I deeply dread,
If, like a slave, where chiefs with chiefs engage,
The warrior Hector fears the war to wage.
Not thus my heart inclines."

From that specimen, too, you can easily divine what, with such a manner, will become of the whole passage. But Homer has neither:

What moves thee, moves my mind —

nor has he:

All these thy anxious cares are also mine.

Ἦ καὶ ἐμοὶ τάδε πάντα μέλει, γύναι· ἀλλὰ μάλ' αἰνῶς—

that is what Homer has, that is his style and movement, if one could but catch it. Andromache, as you know, has been entreating Hector to defend Troy from within the walls, instead of exposing his life, and, with his own life, the safety of all those dearest to him, by fighting in the open plain. Hector replies:

Woman, I too take thought for this; but then I bethink me
What the Trojan men and Trojan women might murmur,
If like a coward I skulk'd behind, apart from the battle.
Nor would my own heart let me; my heart, which has bid me be valiant
Always, and always fighting among the first of the Trojans,
Busy for Priam's fame and my own, in spite of the future.
For that day will come, my soul is assur'd of its coming,
It will come, when sacred Troy shall go to destruction,
Troy, and warlike Priam too, and the people of Priam.
And yet not that grief, which then will be, of the Trojans,

Moves me so much—not Hecuba's grief, nor Priam my father's,
Nor my brethren's, many and brave, who then will be lying
In the bloody dust, beneath the feet of their foemen—
As thy grief, when, in tears, some brazen-coated Achaian
Shall transport thee away, and the day of thy freedom be ended.
Then, perhaps, thou shalt work at the loom of another, in Argos,
Or bear pails to the well of Messeïs, or Hypereia,
Sorely against thy will, by strong Necessity's order.
And some man may say, as he looks and sees thy tears falling:
See, the wife of Hector, that great pre-eminent captain
Of the horsemen of Troy, in the day they fought for their city.
So some man will say; and then thy grief will redouble
At thy want of a man like me, to save thee from bondage.
But let me be dead, and the earth be mounded above me,
Ere I hear thy cries, and thy captivity told of.

The main question, whether or no this version reproduces for him the movement and general effect of Homer better than other versions * of the same passage, I leave for the judgment of the scholar. But the particular points, in which the operation of my own rules is manifested, are as follows. In the second line I leave out the epithet of the Trojan women, ἑλκεσιπέπλους, altogether. In the sixth line I put in five words, "in spite of the future," which are in the original by implication only, and are not there actually expressed. This I do, because Homer, as I have before said, is so remote from one who reads him in English, that the English translator must

* Dr. Hawtrey also has translated this passage; but here, he has not, I think, been so successful as in his "Helen on the walls of Troy."

be even plainer, if possible, and more unambiguous than Homer himself; the connection of meaning must be even more distinctly marked in the translation than in the original. For in the Greek language itself there is something which brings one nearer to Homer, which gives one a clue to his thought, which makes a hint enough; but in the English language this sense of nearness, this clue, is gone; hints are insufficient, everything must be stated with full distinctness. In the ninth line Homer's epithet for Priam is ἐϋμμελίω—"armed with good ashen spear," say the dictionaries; "ashen-speared," translates Mr. Newman, following his own rule to "retain every peculiarity of his original"—I say, on the other hand, that ἐϋμμελίω has not the effect of a "peculiarity" in the original while "ashen-speared" has the effect of a "peculiarity" in English; and "warlike" is as marking an equivalent as I dare give for ἐϋμμελίω, for fear of disturbing the balance of expression in Homer's sentence. In the fourteenth line, again, I translate χαλκοχιτώνων by "brazen-coated:" Mr. Newman, meaning to be perfectly literal, translates it by "brazen-cloak'd," an expression which comes to the reader oddly and unnaturally, while Homer's word comes to him quite naturally; but I venture to go as near to a literal rendering as "brazen-coated," because a "coat of brass" is familiar to us all from the Bible, and

familiar, too, as distinctly specified in connection with the wearer. Finally, let me farther illustrate from the twentieth line the value which I attach, in a question of diction, to the authority of the Bible. The word "pre-eminent" occurs in that line: I was a little in doubt whether that was not too bookish an expression to be used in rendering Homer, as I can imagine Mr. Newman to have been a little in doubt whether his "responsively accosted," for *ἀμειβόμενος προσέφη*, was not too bookish an expression. Let us both, I say, consult our Bibles: Mr. Newman will nowhere find in his Bible that David, for instance, "*responsively accosted* Goliath;" but I do find in mine that "the right hand of the Lord hath the *pre-eminence*;" and forthwith I use "pre-eminent" without scruple. My Bibliolatry is perhaps excessive; and no doubt a true poetic feeling is the Homeric translator's best guide in the use of words; but where this feeling does not exist, or is at fault, I think he cannot do better than take for a mechanical guide Cruden's Concordance. To be sure, here as elsewhere, the consulter must know how to consult—must know how very slight a variation of word or circumstance makes the difference between an authority in his favour and an authority which gives him no countenance at all: for instance, the "Great simpleton!" (for *μέγα νήπιος*) of Mr. Newman, and the "Thou fool!" of the Bible, are something alike; but "Thou fool!" is very grand, and "Great simple-

ton!" is an atrocity. So, too, Chapman's "Poor wretched beasts" is pitched many degrees too low; but Shakspeare's "Poor venomous fool, Be angry and despatch!" is in the grand style.

One more piece of translation, and I have done. I will take the passage in which both Chapman and Mr. Newman have already so much excited our astonishment, the passage at the end of the nineteenth book of the Iliad, the dialogue between Achilles and his horse Xanthus, after the death of Patroclus. Achilles begins:

"Xanthus and Balius both, ye far-fam'd seed of Podarga!
See that ye bring your master home to the host of the Argives
In some other sort than your last, when the battle is ended;
And not leave him behind, a corpse on the plain, like Patroclus."
Then, from beneath the yoke, the fleet horse Xanthus address'd him:
Sudden he bow'd his head, and all his mane, as he bow'd it,
Stream'd to the ground by the yoke, escaping from under the collar;
And he was given a voice by the white-arm'd Goddess Hera.
"Truly, yet this time will we save thee, mighty Achilles!
But thy day of death is at hand; nor shall *we* be the reason—
No, but the will of Heaven, and Fate's invincible power.
For by no slow pace or want of swiftness of ours
Did the Trojans obtain to strip the arms from Patroclus;
But that prince among Gods, the son of the lovely-hair'd Leto,
Slew him fighting in front of the fray, and glorified Hector.
But, for us, we vie in speed with the breath of the West-Wind,
Which, men say, is the fleetest of winds; 'tis thou who art fated
To lie low in death, by the hand of a God and a Mortal."
Thus far he; and here his voice was stopped by the Furies.
Then, with a troubled heart, the swift Achilles address'd him:
"Why dost thou prophesy so my death to me, Xanthus? It needs not.

I of myself know well, that here I am destin'd to perish,
Far from my father and mother dear: for all that, I will not
Stay this hand from fight, till the Trojans are utterly routed."
So he spake, and drove with a cry his steeds into battle.

Here the only particular remark which I will make is, that in the fourth and eighth line the grammar is what I call a loose and idiomatic grammar; in writing a regular and literary style, one would in the fourth line have to repeat, before "leave," the words "that ye" from the second line, and to insert the word "do;" and in the eighth line one would not use such an expression as "he was given a voice." But I will make one general remark on the character of my own translations, as I have made so many on that of the translations of others. It is, that over the graver passages there is shed an air somewhat too strenuous and severe, by comparison with that lovely ease and sweetness which Homer, for all his noble and masculine way of thinking, never loses.

Here I stop. I have said so much, because I think that the task of translating Homer into English verse both will be re-attempted, and may be re-attempted successfully. There are great works composed of parts so disparate, that one translator is not likely to have the requisite gifts for poetically rendering all of them. Such are the works of Shakspeare, and Goethe's Faust; and these it is best to attempt to render in prose only. People praise Tieck and

Schlegel's version of Shakspeare: I, for my part, would sooner read Shakspeare in the French prose translation, and that is saying a great deal; but in the German poets' hands Shakspeare so often gets, especially where he is humorous, an air of what the French call *niaiserie!* and can anything be more un-Shakspearian than that? Again; Mr. Hayward's prose translation of the first part of Faust — so good that it makes one regret Mr. Hayward should have abandoned the line of translation for a kind of literature which is, to say the least, somewhat slight — is not likely to be surpassed by any translation in verse. But poems like the Iliad, which, in the main, are in one manner, may hope to find a poetical translator so gifted and so trained as to be able to learn that one manner, and to reproduce it. Only, the poet who would reproduce this must cultivate in himself a Greek virtue by no means common among the moderns in general, and the English in particular — *moderation.* For Homer has not only the English vigour, he has the Greek grace; and when one observes the boisterous, rollicking way, in which his English admirers — even men of genius, like the late Professor Wilson — love to talk of Homer and his poetry, one cannot help feeling that there is no very deep community of nature between them and the object of their enthusiasm. "It is very well, my good friends," I always imagine Homer saying to them, if he could hear them: "you do me a great deal of honour, but

somehow or other you praise me too like barbarians." For Homer's grandeur is not the mixed and turbid grandeur of the great poets of the north, of the authors of Othello and Faust; it is a perfect, a lovely grandeur. Certainly his poetry has all the energy and power of the poetry of our ruder climates; but it has, besides, the pure lines of an Ionian horizon, the liquid clearness of an Ionian sky.

THE END.

LONDON
PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO.
NEW-STREET SQUARE